THE WIRE
ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

ISSUE 183 · MAY 99 · £2·80 / US $6·50

Alec Empire's jukebox

Peter Thomas space cadet

Basement Jaxx

Richard Pinhas

A Certain Frank

Stuart Dempster

Can *in Cologne*

The Dice Men
Cage, Zorn, Kagel and the music of chance

MARK E SMITH

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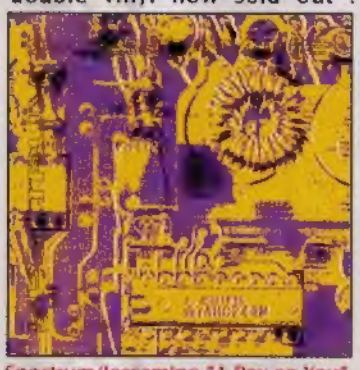

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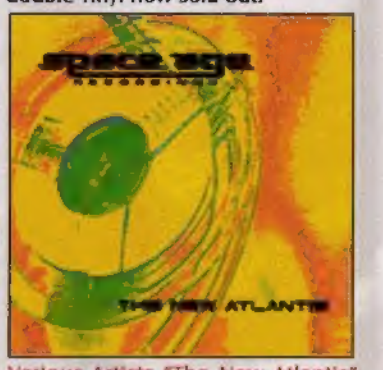

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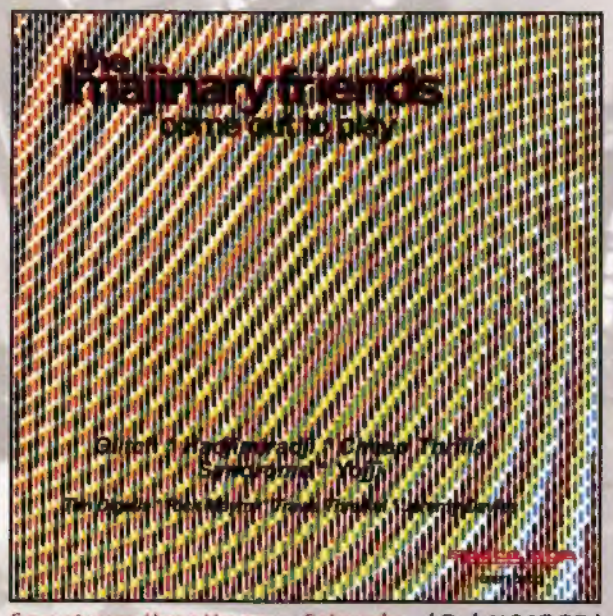

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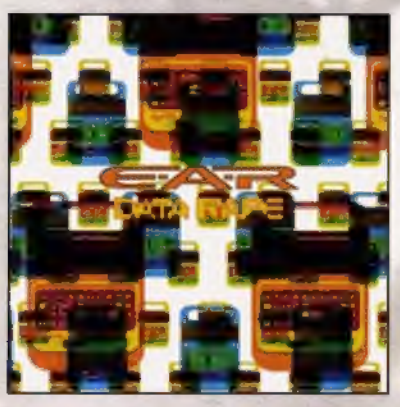

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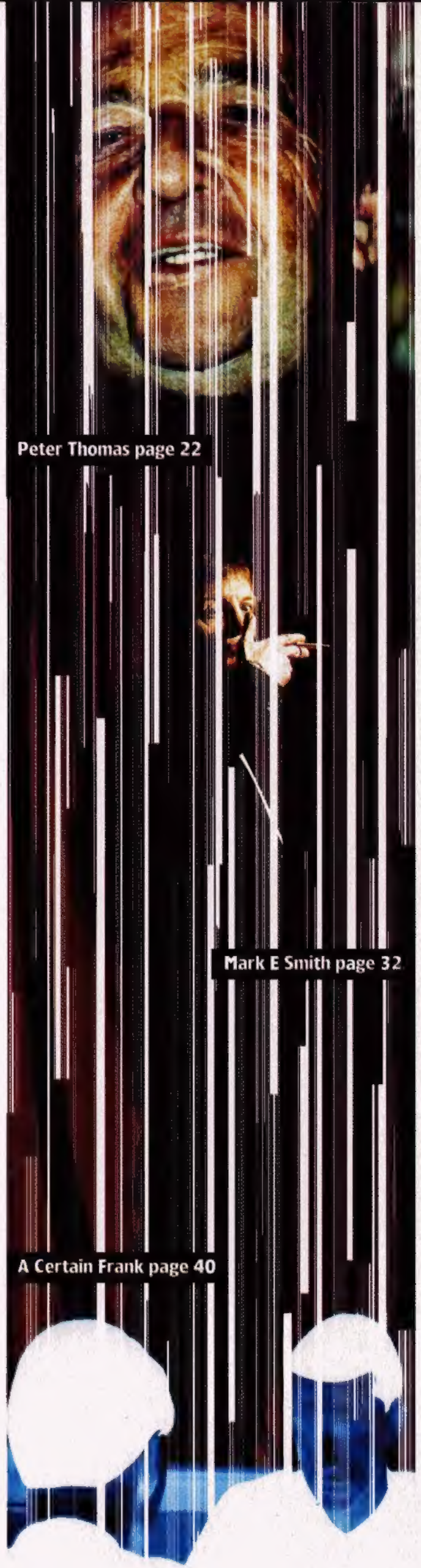
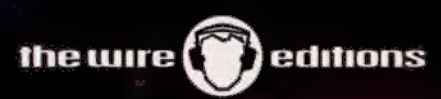


rhys chatham hard edge

cd released april 99 by the wire editions label 60 minutes of breakbeat-driven electric jazz fission featuring gary smith, pat thomas, gary jeff, lou ciccotelli

the wire editions is the in-house record label of the wire magazine - tel: +44 (0)171 439 6422 - fax: +44 (0)171 287 4767 - e-mail: the_wire@ukonline.co.uk - web: www.dfuse.com/the-wire
distributed by harmonia mundi - tel: +44 (0)171 608 2787 - fax: +44 (0)171 253 3237 - orders: +44 (0)171 253 0863 - e-mail: hmwire@harmoniamundi.com



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Issue 183 May 1999
£2.80/$6.50 ISSN 0952-0686 (USPS 006231)

45-46 Poland Street · London W1V 3DF · UK
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Advertising e-mail: *ads.wire@ukonline.co.uk*
Subscriptions e-mail: *subs.wire@ukonline.co.uk*
Web: *www.dfuse.com/the-wire*

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Images **Amy & Tanveer, Julian Anderson, Frank Bauer, Dean Belcher, Iris Garrelfs, Tim Kent Adam Lawrence, Simon Leigh, Magda, Joe Miles, Savage Pencil, Maria Ramström, Nik Strangelove, Michele Turriani, Eva Vermandel**

Cover photo of Mark E Smith in London **Dean Belcher**

Additional thanks this issue to Mike Shallcross

Distribution

UK & Europe	USA
Seymour Distribution	**Eastern News Distributors**
86 Newman Street	250 West 55th Street
London W1P 3LD	New York, NY 10019, USA
Tel: 0171 396 8000	Tel: 212 649 4484
Fax: 0171 396 8002	*(USA newsstand queries: call Toll Free 1800 221 3148)*

Subscriptions	Rates (12 issues)
The Wire	**UK** £30
45-46 Poland Street	**Europe** £35
London W1V 3DF, UK	**USA** $60/£35
Hotline: +44 (0)171 734 3555	**Rest Of World**
E-mail: subs.wire@ukonline.co.uk	£50 Air/£35 Surface

Chairman of the Namara Group **Naim Attallah**

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Printed by St Ives PLC • Reproduction by DP Graphics
The Wire is a member of the Namara Group
USA: *The Wire* ISSN 0952-0686 (USPS 006231) is published monthly for $60 by The Wire Magazine Ltd. Periodicals postage paid at Champlain, NY 12919-1518. Postmaster, send address changes to: *The Wire* c/o IMS of New York, PO Box 1518, Champlain, NY 12919-1518

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editor's idea

In the days leading up to my appointed interview with Mark E Smith, which forms the basis for this month's cover story, I become feverish. Literally, as my body comes under attack from an unidentified, virulent bug; but also psychically.

I have interviewed Mark once before, over two and a half years ago now, and in retrospect I realise I was underprepared for that first meeting; my lines of enquiry only half-formed, petering out early, the conversation dissipating in the enervating fug of a mid-summer daytime drinking session. This time I must be better prepared, I decide, and so I immerse myself in deep background.

Inevitably, the site of my investigations is the infinite library. Spending hours on-line, I hit the Website that contains the unofficial annotated lyric sheets to hundreds of songs written by Mark E Smith over the last two decades, the texts transcribed by ear from records and bootleg concert tapes by anonymous Fall obsessives, ready for download by other Fall obsessives. Noting two early references, in two songs separated by a number of years, to the Battle of Culloden, in which the Duke of Cumberland, referred to as 'Stinking Billy', defeated the Scots in bloody conflict, I try to calculate whether I need to do any further reading on this apocalyptic episode in British history. Somehow, I land on a site commemorating the 400th anniversary of the birth of Cromwell, the Lord Protector, a Puritan tyrant to some, but to others, such as Mark E Smith, the original working class hero.

I download pages of text from the FallNet discussion group, some of whose contributors are on a mission to reveal the sources for many of Mark's formidable lyric-texts. Some of the postings announce unusual findings, uncovering strange precedents in the realms of the autodidact; the rogue backwaters of unofficial history, science, literature and philosophy. Two rich sources of information are revealed to be William Shirer's massive history of the Third Reich, and *The Morning Of The Magicians* by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier, which documents such sinister, mysterious secret societies as the Rosicrucians, the Golden Dawn, the Nine Unknown Men, the Vril and the Thule. This strange, obscure little book also contains an explication of the theory of Eternal Ice, which, it is suggested in a chapter titled "A Few Years In The Absolute Elsewhere", formed the cosmic-occult-philosophical grounding for the rise of Hitler and National Socialism.

FallNetters call on surprise witnesses to support their cases, including the Oulipo, the group of French writers that dealt in absurdist, avant garde linguistics. A tortuous, speculative reference to writings on millenarianism and chillinism by the alchemist Fulcanelli leads me to Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit Of The Millennium*, and his chapters on the Ranters, mystical English zealots who clashed violently with the official doctrines of 17th century Christianity.

Clicking methodically through a maze of links, I find an essay on one of Mark E Smith's avowed heros, HP Lovecraft, 'the King of Weird', written by the critic Joyce Carol Oates in 1996 for *The New York Review Of Books*. In the article, Oates draws parallels between the life patterns of Lovecraft and Edgar Allen Poe: "Both tried to sell their writing skills. . . in a debased and demeaning marketplace, with little financial reward. . . Both were beset by dreams, nightmares, 'visions'. Both entered upon brief, disastrous marriages. . . Both died prematurely. . . having egregiously mistreated their bodies." As I read, I think of Mark Smith's own life story so far, and feel myself surpressing the urge to forge a third parallel of my own.

Under the weight of these private investigations, my thought processes grow fuzzy. After some confusion regarding the location, the interview eventually takes place in a deserted basement restaurant in West London on a crisp Sunday morning in early April. Mark seems relaxed and in good humour, less spooked and hunched over than the previous time we met. But in the cold light of day, the idea of asking him whether his 1979 song "Before The Moon Falls" has its origins in the theory of Eternal Ice, for instance, seems beyond absurd. And in the end I demur; ignoring some of the more esoteric lines of enquiry scrawled in the notebook, partly because many of them relate to songs written upwards of 20 years ago now, and I am mindful of the fact that during our previous meeting, Mark appeared to regard his own personal past as another country, one whose borders are perpetually closed.

So did I bottle the assignment? Turn to page 32, and decide for yourself. **TONY HERRINGTON**

The June issue of *The Wire*: *On sale: Tuesday 25 May*

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The Wire* newsgroup: *www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/thewire

letters

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MP3 muddle

Rob Young's piece on the MP3 format (Multimedia, *The Wire* 182), while more or less there technically, ended in rather muddled conclusions. It's conventional among both 'information wants to be free' Net freaks and sample-happy Cubase adepts to regard copyright as another of the Man's evil instruments of repression. But isn't *The Wire*'s constituency of low-budget artists and DIY releases that much more vulnerable to being ripped off than million-sellers like Michael Jackson or Madonna? The RIAA executive's comment he quoted certainly wasn't poetry, but it could hardly be described as "sinister". If Young thinks "consumer transactions involving music" are pernicious, does he believe musicians (not to mention *Wire* journalists) shouldn't be making a living from their work?

Young seems not to have read his own words — let alone understood the Internet — when he concludes that MP3 is a great idea "until the big shots muscle in". If artist and listener both want their music distributed in this way it'll keep happening, whether or not the majors give the format their blessing. The plethora of independent record labels listed in your Directory every month illustrates the demand for means of music distribution that sidestep mega-corporate whim, and it's inconceivable that the Internet won't play an increasing part in this as it becomes more practical and accessible. Nothing will stop the digital equivalent of tape trading between friends, but if the technology can prevent a digital release from being instantly bootlegged worldwide, aren't artists entitled to that protection?
Tom Hawkins *Stockport*

Rampant Penmania

Not being a natural-born wagger of the English tongue myself, I cannot but admit that for many a re(re(re(re))) reading-dong-ding of many a text penned by Ian Penman, I've dragged out my two weathered tomes of English-Estonian dictionary with delight and sore-thumbed 'em in wondrous goddevilment long into the night. Never in vain!

Being a freely-lanced part-time music journalist (a fact, though, that I occasionally do not regret), I cannot but admit: the numerous Pen-manned articles, as well as the others Sinker-ed and Simon-ed and Toop-ed and Bell-ed, have never failed to bolster up one's belief that this is something definitely worth doing. And trying. Being a *Wire* subscriber — a fact never ever to regret — I cannot but stutter in utter Estonishment: many thanx, Ian and *The Wire*, for the spectral Undercurrents #4: Listening Aids (*The Wire* 182). You made my (night and) day. And my thumbs sore again.
Tiit Kusnets *Tartu, Estonia*

Cheerfully destructive characters

I really enjoyed Undercurrents #2: Destroy All Music (*The Wire* 180) about Italian Futurism, and I was especially grateful to see Russolo given such extensive treatment. The article managed to take him out of Marinetti's shadow and establish his own place in the history of modern music. However, it seems to place too much emphasis on academic musicians like John Cage, who may have been influenced by the sounds but not the Futurists' anti-academic stance.

Futurism, at its base, was against all things academic and thus all things historical. Marinetti and Russolo were only interested in new sounds, new ideas, and wanted to destroy anything grounded in tradition. Granted, Russolo eventually stopped associating with Marinetti, as the article points out, and worked with other, more diverse artists later on. But his work still stands.

Cage, Schaeffer, and the Lettrists were being inherently historical in their own espousing of Russolo. They were looking to the past for influences and thereby diminish the Futurists' chief agenda — to destroy the past. And although that may have been one moment in Russolo's career, it is his most impacting, especially considering the legacy of his book, *The Art Of Noises*.

The principles of sound may be the same between these later creators and Russolo, but Cage and company's self-consciousness in looking to the past places them within an academic discourse that would be considered an insult by early Russolo and his Futurist friends, and would thus not be as apt a comparison.

I think it would have been appropriate to look in greater detail at the more countercultural genres of popular music, such as Industrial music. Groups like Einstürzende Neubauten, Cabaret Voltaire, and Test Dept espouse similar anti-academic views to those of the Futurists, while still creating similar machine-like noises and sounds.
Jon Weldon *via e-mail*

Impulsive disorder

Re: Jeff Parker's letter about the review of John Coltrane's *Complete Impulse! Recordings* box set (Letters, *The Wire* 182): I've no idea who gave most freedom to John Coltrane — Atlantic or Impulse!. But at the time Coltrane jumped ship from Atlantic, it was an independent label in every sense, still managed by its founder Ahmet Ertegun and with a jazz department run by his brother Nesuhi, who I'm confident would never have recommended his production staff to dictate to Coltrane what he should do in the studio. Atlantic later sold out to Warner and did indeed become a major label, but that should not be used as a yardstick to assess its jazz department's A&R policy back in the mid-60s. On the other hand, I've always understood that Impulse! was a division of ABC and could not properly be described as an independent label. But in any case, it's dangerous to use the major/independent criteria as the main yardstick for judging the degree of artist freedom likely to have been allowed to a musician, whether jazz or 'popular'. Some of the fiercest direction came from indie moguls at Savoy and King, and some of the greatest lenience was shown by benign despots at Columbia, notably in their treatment of Miles Davis. Ask any jazz musican whether he would rather have worked under John Hammond at Columbia or Herman Lubinsky at Savoy. No contest.

By the way, I loved the piece a couple of issues back on Timbaland (*The Wire* 178). How great it would be if there was a comparable critical appreciation in every issue of *The Wire* about sonic adventurers who are battling it out in the mainstream.
Charlie Gillett *London*

Strung out

Rahma Khazam's interview with Paul Panhuysen (*The Wire* 182) was greatly appreciated. It's a shame that this extraordinary sound artist hasn't been the subject of a far more in-depth article in the past given the extent of his work over the decades; and to hear that the Het Apollohuis has finally had to close its doors is terrible news. I had the good fortune of visiting the building a couple of years ago, and was moved by not only the purity of Panhuysen's installation work but also his patience and generosity in personally explaining the work to us.

Khazam's article omitted mentioning one key Panhuysen release: the 3xLP box set of collaborative work he did with Johan Goedhart. Entitled *Long String Installations: 1983-1985*, the beautifully packaged box collects their work done largely within The Netherlands, but also across Europe. Listening to the sometimes abrasive, and sometimes gliding nature of sounds produced by the duo and their strings/environments, it sounds like the foundation stone of everything Panhuysen did later on.
Hassni Malik *Epsom Downs*

Down the pan

I was shocked to hear that Captain Beefheart likened making music to going to the bathroom (*The Wire* 182). Perhaps he felt his music was shit, or maybe he was taking the piss. Now that he's pursuing his painting, it seems he's washed his hands of the subject. I couldn't resist.
Vincent McCabe *London*

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Monday 31 May

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Circuit-mending

A number of people here in the States have contacted me about a review of EAR's *Data Rape* CD (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 177), giving the impression that the group's Pete Kember had invented the circuit-bent Speak & Spell machine and, in fact, circuit-bending itself. I thought your writer, Brian Duguid [*Velimir Pavle Ilic, actually — Ed*] might get a laugh out of knowing that I introduced Pete to circuit-bending and sold him his first circuit-bent instrument (Trigon Incantor), later showing him my Incantor (circuit-bent Speak & Spell) and convincing him to try making his own: *Data Rape* was born.

It's simple. Anyone can do it. I've pioneered circuit-bending for the last 30 years. I also design for Tom Waits, Peter Gabriel, King Crimson, Blur, Faust, etc, etc, etc. The following URLs will explain more:
Circuit-bending, an interview:
www.furious.com/perfect/emi/reedghazala.html
Gallery: *w3.one.net/~dshaw/atw/*
Music: *207.137.50.71/reviews/*
Reed Ghazala *via e-mail*

Sleepless in Tampere

Within the last few weeks I have had serious problems going to sleep in the evenings as well as to get to work in the mornings. This is mainly due to a few dozen *Wires* dating back to the 1993 era. Since I wasn't 'there', it has been a mind expanding experience to get such a big number of interesting articles on the contemporary music of that time (and great retrospective articles, too) and widen the perspective on the background of today's musics.

And a short comment concerning Undercurrents #3: Music Of The Spheres (181): unlike Rob Young says in his article, it is not a particularly new thing to map visual information into the sonic output. Since the late 60s a Finnish electronics wizard (who worked at the time in the studio at the University of Helsinki), Erkki Kurenniemi, built more or less privately several experimental and advanced (perhaps 'obscure' would fit fine, too) synthesizers. Already in the early 70s he had made a microprocessor-controlled, programmable synthesizer. An optical control system, via some sort of video camera, was implemented for DIMI-O in early 1971. Most probably there were also other mad scientists who explored this field; I just happen not to know them. Even if I have never heard what Kurenniemi's instruments sound like, to me they seem extremely interesting because of their very advanced, intuitive user interface and pioneering use of digital electronics in musical instruments. Now, who said that Pan Sonic's instruments are weird?
Tommi Keränen *Tampere, Finland*

Stirring the P-Orridge

It might be that this is just some useless mail, and not worth a free CD for being printed [*Oh come now — Ed*], but it really struck me so I have to share it. In the picture on page 74 (*The Wire* 181), Genesis P-Orridge looks just like Robbie Williams. I hope that's the only similarity I find between Throbbing Gristle and Take That.
Tobias Schmitt *via e-mail*

Deep hurt

In his review of my book *Jan Garbarek: Deep Song* (Print Run, *The Wire* 181), Andy Hamilton quotes me as saying that, in order to appreciate the Nordic qualities in Garbarek's work,"one has to cease seeing that work through the filter of a sensibility attuned to [. . .] jazz". What I actually wrote was: "a sensibility attuned solely to [. . .] jazz". Unmentioned by Hamilton, much of *Deep Song* is concerned to evaluate and celebrate key aspects of the evolving language(s) of jazz, as well as Garbarek's relation with and contribution to a music which is absolutely central to the 20th century and beyond.

Readers can judge for themselves whether, for example, the discussion of Garbarek's work in the 1960s with Afro-American masters George Russell and Don Cherry (or with such fellow Scandinavians as Karin Krog and Jon Christensen, Arild Wikstrøm and Terje Bjørklund, Bernt Rosengren and NHØP, Arild Andersen and Terje Rypdal) is part of that "massive referential overload" which Hamilton claims to find in *Deep Song* — or, in fact, but one of the many essential contextual aspects of Garbarek's life and work which the book covers in originally researched depth, and which, for reasons best known to himself, Hamilton chose to ignore in his review.
Michael Tucker *Brighton*

Never alone on your Todd

Re: Epiphanies, *The Wire* 180. My kind regards to Edwin Pouncey for his unforeseen take on Todd Rundgren. It's funny to see how Pouncey and myself have both led the same path: starting with the quirky *A Wizard, A True Star*, I avidly went for every other Rundgren stuff, after which I finally had a close contact with soul. And the conclusion was similar to that of Pouncey's: though I'm a soul lover today, none of those Motown/Stax acts had the surrealist twist of soul brother Todd. But unlike Pouncey, I didn't feel annoyed by what he describes as an "undeniable flaw" — referring, as he did, to the "compacted grooves" in the short timing of *Wizard*. On the contrary, I've always thought that the record was meant to be a mockery of concept albums, an electronic pop device, and ultimately a joke predating future recordings like The Residents' *Commercial Album*. However, it's true that pop masterpieces like *Todd*, or *Wizard* itself, lacked the awareness and technical concision necessary for any 'groundbreaking' album. They were tentative, though willing steps towards state-of-the-art recordings. But I'd keep listening to them, perhaps because they're the only testament left of a genre that was essentially stillborn. It's actually a shame that those crossovers between avant ideas and pop/soul feel hadn't been developed by anyone apart from him. When Rundgren ended his whole affair, opting instead for a more traditional pop career, nobody picked up where he left off.
Jorge Luis Fernández *Buenos Aires, Argentina*

Raving and ranting

Thanks for Rob Young's informative Pythagorean probings (Undercurrents, *The Wire* 181) — now, whenever some dimwit melodicist dismisses my favourite music as "just a racket" I can not only call 'em a square, but a square on the hypotenuse to boot.

But surely Pan Sonic (same issue) deserved the front cover, what with the release of perhaps *the* electronica album of the century. After all, Nick Cave was right — that cover interview was pointless since nothing new was revealed and as for the history of The Birthday Party, it's been well documented.

Hey Don Watson! If PiL make you want to spout farmyard metaphor (Soundcheck, same issue) then Jah Wobble's bass was more of a tractor back tyre type sound than a cattle prod. And surely rant and narrative are not mutually exclusive? "Bodies" employs both if I'm not mistaken: *"She was a girl from Birmingham/She just had an abortion/She was a case of insanity/Her name was Pauline/She lived in a tree/She was a no one/Killed her baby/She sent us letters from the country."* A heartwarming narrative, so to speak. As for your dismissal of *The Flowers Of Romance* as repetitive, well, surely that was the whole point.
The Fibreglass Messiah *Manchester*

Bubble vision

David Toop's "Do The Bathosphere" is on the repeat loop in tribute to Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones (not the dead one), who have just successfully completed the first non-stop voyage around the world in a balloon. Mr Piccard's grandfather was the first to reach the stratosphere in a balloon capsule. He also managed to build the Bathyscape, a sort of submarine allowing deep water descent. Piccard's father holds the record for the deepest manned sea descent, using this device. David Toop, in a tune captured on *New And Rediscovered Musical Instruments*, one of Brian Eno's early Obscure Records releases, helps us to dance. Thanks to all who encourage us to sink so high and soar so low.
SP Elias *via e-mail*

Corrections

Issue 182: On the sleeve of last month's free CD, *The Wire Tapper 3*, the track listings for two of the selections were inadvertently printed the wrong way round. Track 12 is actually Paul Panhuysen's "Partita For 16 Long Strings Proportionally Tuned", and track 13 is Robert Ashley's "Your Money My Life Goodbye". Apologies for the error. In the Directory, Jah Wobble's 30 Hertz label was omitted from the listing. The details are: 30 Hertz Records, PO Box 11177, London E2 0TY. E-mail: *data@30hertzrecords.com*. Website: *www.30hertzrecords.com*. Distributed by Vital. □

SABOTAGE RECORDINGS
(Record label)

1995-99

With affection and gratitude we pay tribute
to the memory of the Viennese label Sabotage Recordings which
in its fifth year shall pass into the next life on 7 May 1999.
On this day its entire stock of records
shall be melted down and asphalted into the dancefloor of the
Viennese club Flex.

The Mournes:

Adult., Airlock, Alex Is My Bro, Aube,
Aural Screenshots, Autorepeat, A. Burger, Bannlust,
Beanfield, Bluish, Bizzy Booster, Clank, con*,
CRB, Dj Cutex, Puck Dannin, Def Con,
Gerard Deluxxe, DFKT,
Richard Dorfmeister, Fadi Dorninger,
Dj Dosis, Demon Flowers, Dependance,
Dj DSL, Ectomorph, Dj Elin, EPY,

Kodwo Eshun, Farmers Manual, Fennesz,
Dj Functionist, Ganymed, Umberto Gollini,
DJ Hell, Alois Huber, Rupert Huber, I-F,
Ryoji Ikeda, Jumboo, Krok, Le Car, Line,
Lonny & Melvin, Dan Lodig, Master DBH,
Men at Arms, Clemens Neufeld,
Operator Böastab, Oltraslab, Dj Overdose, Panacea,
Parallax Corporation, Pita, Plak, Pomassl,

Patrick Pulsinger, Gerhard Potuznik,
The Private Lightning Six, Dj Pure,
Rhacoon, Retroman, Gerwald Rockenschaub,
Sandbenders, Satanic Soul,
Second Hand Investigations, Sluta Leta, Sugar B,
Don Summer, Texta, Erdem Tunakan,
Ultradyne, Ül, Urbs & Chaoz, Matt Winch,
Helmut Wolfgruber, Zink

The burial shall take place in a private ceremony followed by a public event on the same evening.

Friday, May 07, 1999 after 10 pm
Dancefloor Flex
Donaukanal, 1010 Vienna

Your condolences and prayers are sincerely
appreciated.

CH. STEINEGGER AT SUERO X

soundings may

Festivals, happenings and special events

Pierre Henry

PHOTO: LOUIS VINCENT

LMC Eighth Annual Festival Of Experimental Music

For their annual tribal gathering of left-of-centre musics at venues in and around London's South Bank Centre (28–31 May), the London Musicians' Collective have pulled off something of a coup by persuading musique concrète godfather Pierre Henry to perform in what is, astonishingly, his first ever appearance in the UK. He will be mixing and remixing live through a 36-speaker sound system, and his set will be a mixture of original works and remix versions constructed by the likes of William Orbit and Ken Abyss. Joining him on the opening night's bill are Fluxus composer Philip Corner with the South Bank Gamelan Ensemble, and a solo saxophone set by Lol Coxhill (London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 28 May). For the next three nights, the line-ups are as follows. Jah Wobble's Deep Space (in Improv mode, with drummer Mark Sanders, *The Wire*'s Clive Bell on shakuhachi, and reedist Jean-Pierre Rasle); Lindsay Cooper Song Project; William Ingoshi Mwoshi & John Wynne (Purcell Room, 29). Caroline Kraabel's 20-woman sax ensemble Mass Producers display their in-the-round audience penetration; plus Otomo Yoshihide and Sachiko M's turntable duo Filament; and a solo piano session by AMM keyboardist John Tilbury (St John's Church, 30). Finally, the Bank Holiday Monday show features The Tobias Delius Quartet, a dynamic New Dutch Swing Improv group featuring drummer Han Bennink and cellist Tristan Honsinger; Eugene Chadbourne in an avant Country situation with his scratch trio Mondo Chadbourne 2000; and a set of electric noise from Disinformation's Joe Banks (Purcell Room, 31). All concerts start at 7pm, tickets £12/£8 (season tickets £30/£20), Box Office 0171 960 4242, info 0171 403 1922

Labradford's Second London Festival Of Drifting

The Blast First label teams up with London promoters Foundation to present the second survey of post-Ambient experimentalism in eight months (27–29 May). Although it's centred around three triple-bills in the crystal clear acoustics of North London's Union Chapel, the first night takes place in Sheffield, with Labradford, Pole and Matmos (Sheffield Club Generation, 26 May). The London shows feature Labradford, Pole and Matmos, plus DJ Bruce Gilbert (27); Durutti Column, Caspar Brötzmann and Dean Roberts (28); and Throbbing Gristle founder members Chris & Cosey, Oval and Christoph Heeman (29). Additional bar-room sound for the second and third nights will be provided by New York maximalist Phill Niblock. It all comes together on the Sunday, as Labradford play with Rothko, Matmos, Silo, Sean O'Hagan, Instrumental, Pan American, and Dean Roberts at the Improv Theatre (30). Following hte London shows, the whole thing shifts northwards to Scotland, for two nights' Highland Drifting at Edinburgh's Cafe Royal: Labradford, Oval and Bruce Gilbert (31 May); and Pan American, Matmos and Dean Roberts (1 June). For up to date info, call the Union Chapel box office 0171 226 1686

Lancaster New Music Festival

This weekend festival (14–16 May) is hosted by New Music North West, and focuses on two long serving improvisors in the region, Stephen Grew and Phil Marks (a percussionist whose playing is described as "reminiscent of a cage full of excited but controlled sparrowhawks"). They have assembled a programme that includes Lob!, a group led by London-based guitarist Rex Casswell, that mixes avant-funk, electric jazz and free Improv; plus local act 16Hz (14). Excess-trombonist Alan Tomlinson plays at various outdoor locations, and headliner Andy Sheppard performs a solo saxophone set (15). And sax/bassoonist Mick Beck joins bassist Roberto Bellatalla for a fiery duo Improv set, alongside the German lightbulb artist and percussionist Michael Vorfeld (16). Lancaster Gregson Centre, 15–16 May, times/prices vary, info 01524 388109

Interference: Exotica

The latest of *The Wire*'s collaborations with The Lux Centre is an evening dedicated to the music and words of David Toop, in celebration of the publication of his latest book, *Exotica* (Serpent's Tail). The night will feature a mixed media performance from Toop, including readings, discussion and music, and a chance for the audience to question him about his multifarious projects. London Lux Centre, 3 June, 8pm, £6/£3, booking 0171 684 0201, info 0171 439 6422

Homelands

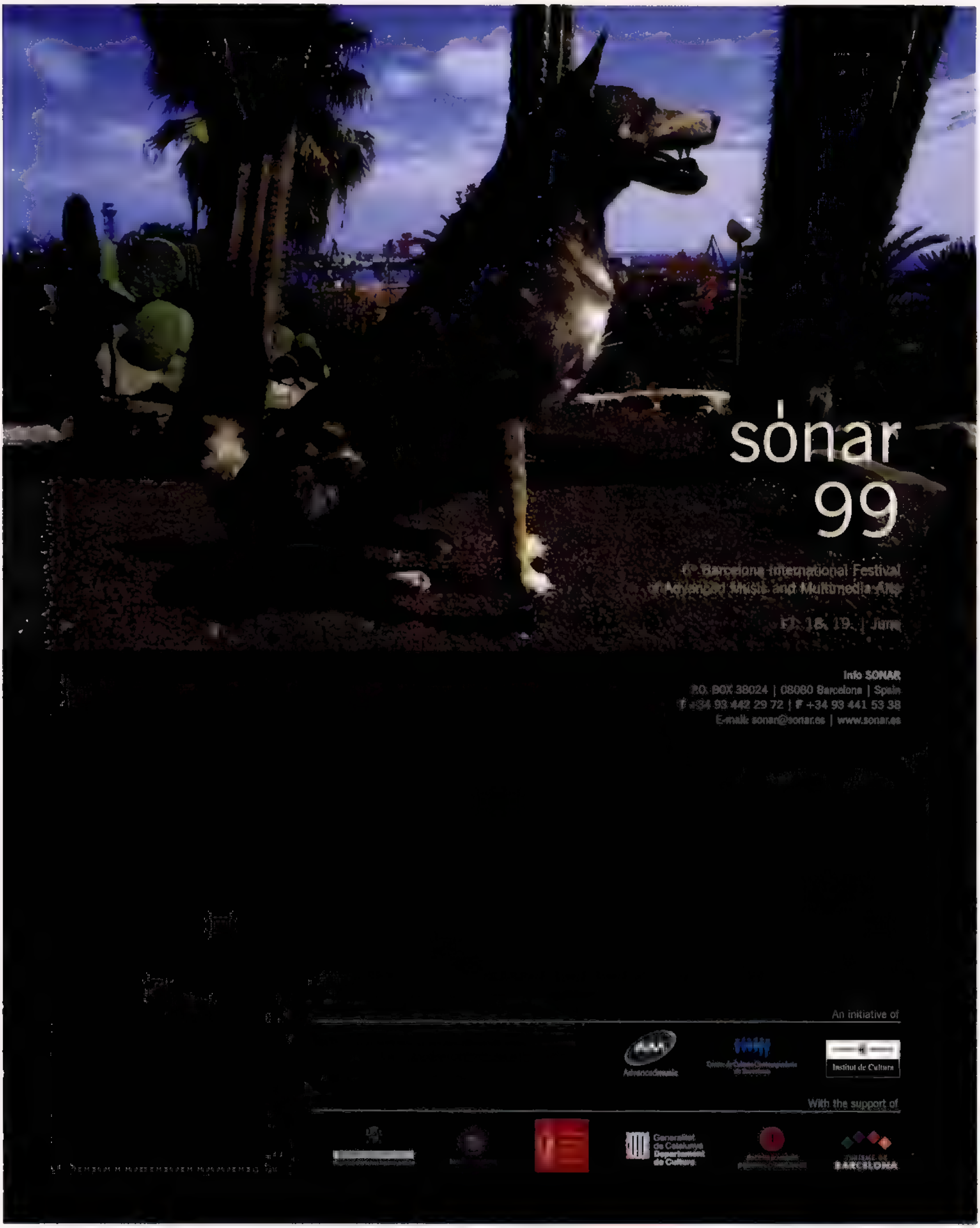
An outdoor arena in the Hampshire countryside is the venue for the first of the summer's inducements to party like it's 1999, with headliners Chemical Brothers, Underworld, Asian Dub Foundation, Red Snapper and Faithless. DJs confirmed so far include Carl Cox, Gilles Peterson, Mr C, Fabio, Grooverider, DJ Hype, DJ Shadow, Stacey Pullen, DJ Krust, Ed Rush, Optical, James Lavelle, Basement Jaxx, Roni Size, Andy C, and dozens of others. Winchester Matterley Bowl, 29–30 May, 1pm–6am, £44, booking 0171 344 0044

¡Cuba Presente!

In the 40th anniversary year of the Cuban revolution comes the UK's biggest ever celebration of the island's art and music. London's Barbican Centre hosts a month and a half of Cuban sounds (14 May–27 June) including son maestros Eliades Ochoa & Cuarteto Patria plus Orquesta Aragón (22 May); trumpeter Jesús Alemañy's ¡Cubanismo! group (29); piano virtuoso Rubén González Y Su Grupo (30); and an Afro-Cuban collision featuring Cameroonian saxophonist Manu Dibango and Cuban rhythm-devils Clave Y Guaguancó (31). The season will be augmented by free foyer events and a Cuban Film Week in the Barbican Cinema. Times/prices vary; Box Office/info 0171 638 8891

Salome

Multi-roomed choreographed event in the crumbling environs of a disused North London Victorian Hotel, with soundscape by Phil Durrant and video art by Jane Hodge and Jaime Rory Lucy. London St Pancras Chambers, 29 April–2 May (four performances per day), £10/£7, info 0171 387 0031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Vision Festival

Rapidly becoming New York's last bastion for the ecstatic jazz movement, the Vision Festival (21-31 May) takes place in the resonant basement of St Nicholas Carpathian Church. Highlights of a huge artist roster include: Sam Rivers Trio, Joseph Jarman, Alan Silva, Leroy Jenkins, Sun Ra Arkestra directed by Marshall Allen, Matthew Shipp, Joe and Mat Maneri, David S Ware Quartet, Zeena Parkins, Thurston Moore/William Hooker duo, Peter Brotzmann, John Zorn/Milford Graves duo, Whit Dickey, James 'Blood' Ulmer, Rob Brown, Noah Howard Quartet, Fred Anderson Trio, William Parker, Billy Higgins, Rashied Ali, Andrew Cyrille and many more. For info, tel 001 212 473 e-mail *sdollar@ajc.com*, Web *www.nickelodeon.org/vision*

Impakt

Four days (between 5-14 May) of vanguard electronic music and beyond, taking place at various club and live spaces in Utrecht, The Netherlands, and organised by the Baroni label's Roland Spekle. *The Wire* co-hosts a night of turntablism with performances from Philip Jeck, Otomo Yoshihide, Thomas Brinkmann, DJ Faust and DJ Shortee (Utrecht Ekko, 13 May, 10pm-2am), preceded by a 'couch debate' in which the turntablists share their thoughts with an audience (Brandweerkaserne, 4pm). Other events include: To Rococo Rot (5), Paul Schutze's

Otomo Yoshihide

Third Site plus a reading by Kodwo Eshun (Tivoli, 11); sampling composer John Wall in trio with bassist John Edwards and percussionist Mark Sanders, followed by Berlin's Chain Reaction engineers Pole, Scion, Substance and Vainqueur (Ekko, 14). Justin Bennett's BMB.con contribute to X-Site, the post-festival party, along with Radboud Mens's 'standing wave' performance and DJing by The Easy Aloha's and *The Wire* Sound System (Tivoli, 14). For info, tel 00 31 30 294 4493, fax 00 31 30 294 4163, e-mail *impakt@xs4all.nl*

Subtropics Festival

Miami's 11th annual avant garde New Music festival (running until 8 May) has invited composers Christian Wolff, James Tenney and Yasunao Tone, plus improvising champion Derek Bailey, as the main acts, while as a flagship for the festival's concern to bridge technology and art, composer/inventor Trimpin debuts his *MIAMI Klangflotte* (*Sound Fleet*), a parade of computer controlled mini-orchestras on wheels, at outdoor locations in Miami-Dade and Broward counties. Info 001 305 758 6676, e-mail *gustavo@earthlink.net*, Web *www.exactaudio.com/events subtropics.htm*

Musique Action

Annual institution in the south of France (15-24 May), with a raft of experimental musicians and impromptu collaborative ventures including: Elliott Sharp's Terraplane, John Cage's *Ryoanji* performed by Le Quan Ninh and others, Tense Serenity with Fred Frith and Chris Cutler, Martin Blume/Luc Houtkamp Quartet, Ethiopia's Mahmoud Ahmed, a reformed Massacre, Ikue Mori, Martin Tétreault, Sensorband, John Butcher, Sachiko M and many more. Vandoeuvre-Lès-Nancy Centre Culturel André Malraux, times/prices vary, tel 00 33 3 83 56 1500, fax 00 33 3 83 53 2185, e-mail *ccam@worldnet.fr*, Web *services.worldnet.fr/ccam*

Musique Actuelle

This eclectic sweep across the borders of jazz, free music and electronica, which takes place in Victoriaville, Quebec, Canada (20-24 May), has reached its 16th edition. Keynote performances come from Peter Brotzmann Tentet, John Zorn/Milford Graves duo, Elliott Sharp's Terraplane, David Kristian, Otomo Yoshihide's Hoahio, Godspeed You Black Emperor!, Gunter Muller/ Jim O'Rourke duo, Ivo Perelman, Mujician, Merzbow, Christian Marclay/Thurston Moore/Lee Ranaldo trio, Maxime Rioux's incredible *Automates K!* automata, and more. For info, tel 001 819 752 7912, fax 001 819 758 4370, e-mail *firmav@cdcbf.qc.ca* Web *www.cdcbf.qc.ca/FIMAV*

Angelica Festival

Ninth annual gathering of New Music stalwarts in Bologna, Italy, subtitled Domestic Flights, and focusing on English experimental musicians including pianist John Tilbury, Fred Frith (playing solo and in trio with Bill Laswell and Charles Hayward), Evan Parker, John Russell/Roger Turner duo, Lol Coxhill, Steve Beresford, Phil Minton, Maggie Nicols, Chris Cutler, John Edwards, Kaffe Matthews, Mike Cooper/Pat Thomas duo, Derek Bailey, AMM and a performance of Cornelius Cardew's *The Great Learning (Paragraph 7)*. Bologna various venues, 18-23 May, info 00 39 051 374877, fax 00 39 051 379353, e-mail *angelica@iperbole.bologna.it*

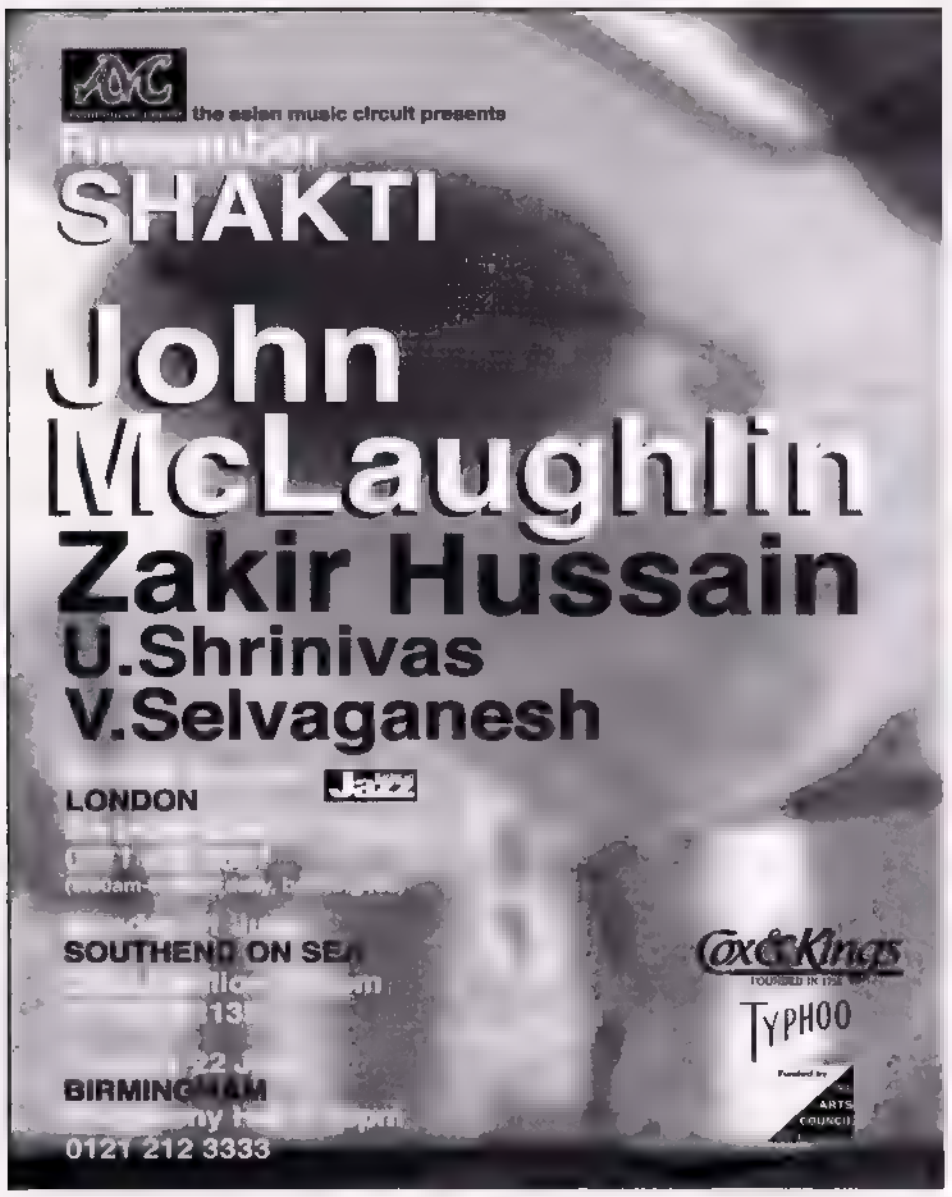
Uncool Jazz Festival

Uncool because (a) it's set high in the Swiss Alps and (b) it's dedicated to the fiercest free jazz stokers, this three day event (13-15 May) features Cecil Taylor solo and in quintet, Charles Gayle Trio, John Russell and Evan Parker, Sainkho Namtchylak, Scatter (Pat Thomas, Dave Tucker, Phil Minton and Roger Turner), Anakoluth, Spok (with Axel Dorner and Matthias Bauer), Global Village (Peter Kowald's Sino-German collaboration with Xu Feng Xia), and plenty more. Le Prese/Lago Di Poschiavo, Switzerland, tel 00 41 81 844 0571, fax 00 41 844 1027, e-mail *jazz@uncool.ch*, Web *www.uncool.ch* □

bitstream

First came the book, then the double CD, now finally here's the ***Can Box*** complete with 130 minute video containing the Can documentary previewed at Daniel Miller's Mini-Meltdown (see On Location, page 78), and *Can-Free-Concert*, filmed in Cologne in 1972. A strictly limited 30th anniversary edition, the box's component parts will not be sold separately for a very long time, says the group's label, Spoon. Except the easily available book, which happens to be the worst thing in the box. Well, that's logical. What with everybody picking over the Can corpse, former bassist **Holger Czukay** also decided to join the feast: he's sampled tracks like "Vitamin C" for his first solo album in six years, called *Good Morning Story*, to be released this summer on Tone Casualties +++ The Talkin' Loud label has licensed some extremely choice **Fela Kuti** reissues from the French Barclay label. First out the gate are two six LP box sets, which gather some of Fela's classic 70s Afro-beat albums, including *Open & Close*, *ITT* and *Sorrow, Tears And Blood*. Then comes a series of ten CDs, each containing two Fela albums apiece and which span the period 1971 to 1981. Meanwhile, more contemporary Afro-beat comes courtesy of *Black Voices*, the excellent forthcoming album fronted by Fela's old drummer **Tony Allen** +++ From the Land of Eternal Night, the Swedish Nàu Ensemble have worked up a chamber music suite, *The Eternal*, based on **Joy Division**'s *Closer* album and "Atmosphere" single. The CD is released by the Atrium label (via Warner Classics) +++ **Alan Vega**, **Lydia Lunch**, trumpeter **Mark Cunningham** (ex-Mars), and **Genesis P-Orridge** and **Bachir Attar** contribute to cult French performance duo Etant Donnés' forthcoming album, *Re Up* (Les Disques Du Soleil Et De L'Acier). Its sequel, *Offenbarung Und Untergang*, will feature Michael Gira, Cunningham and Delkom's Saba Komossa +++ Talking of **Marcel Duchamp** (check your bluffers' guide to dada), the voice of the world's most famous dead Belgian is compiled alongside those of Richard Huelsenbeck, Guillaume Apollinaire, Vladimir Mayakovski, Antonin Artaud, James Joyce, Tristan Tzara, Brion Gysin and Brazilian avant gardist Augusto De Campos on *Luna Park: Unique Archives 1913-1973* (Sub Rosa) +++ Austrian art-subversive label **Sabotage Records** are officially terminating their enterprise on 7 May, and in an act of self-destruction, they'll be plastering their entire vinyl stock onto the dancefloor of Vienna's Flex club, to be trampled underfoot. From then on, they'll inexplicably be carrying on operations under the name Subetage +++ More terminations: after **Coldcut** were made to quit their long running, eclectic show *Solid Steel* by London dance station Kiss, Manchester station Galaxy 102 have also eliminated one of their only non-mainstream assets by sacking DJ Matt Thompson, whose weekly show gave the only respite from hours of playlisted beats. The homogenisation of Britains's airwaves continues +++ New Music boffins are faced with a Catch-22 situation this July, as two composer heavyweights run concurrent musical awareness sessions. **Karlheinz Stockhausen**'s Composition and Interpretation Courses, with masterclasses and performances, take place between 18-25 July in his base in Kurten, Germany (info fax 00 49 22 68 18 13), while the **Pauline Oliveros** Foundation run their Ninth Annual Deep Listening Retreat in the same week (18-23) in the Sangre de Christo mountains, New Mexico (info at *www.deeplistening.org*)

THE TRAWLER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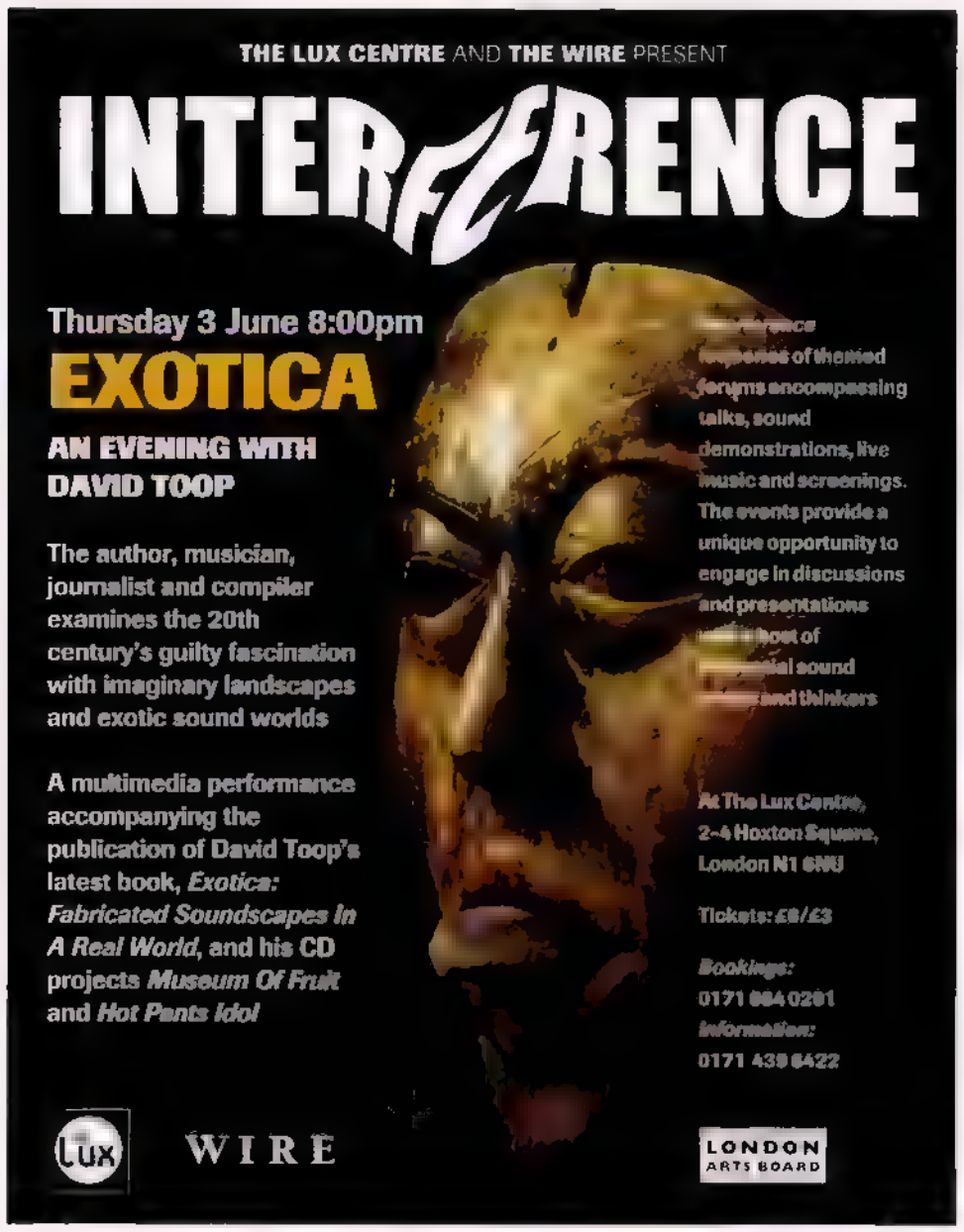
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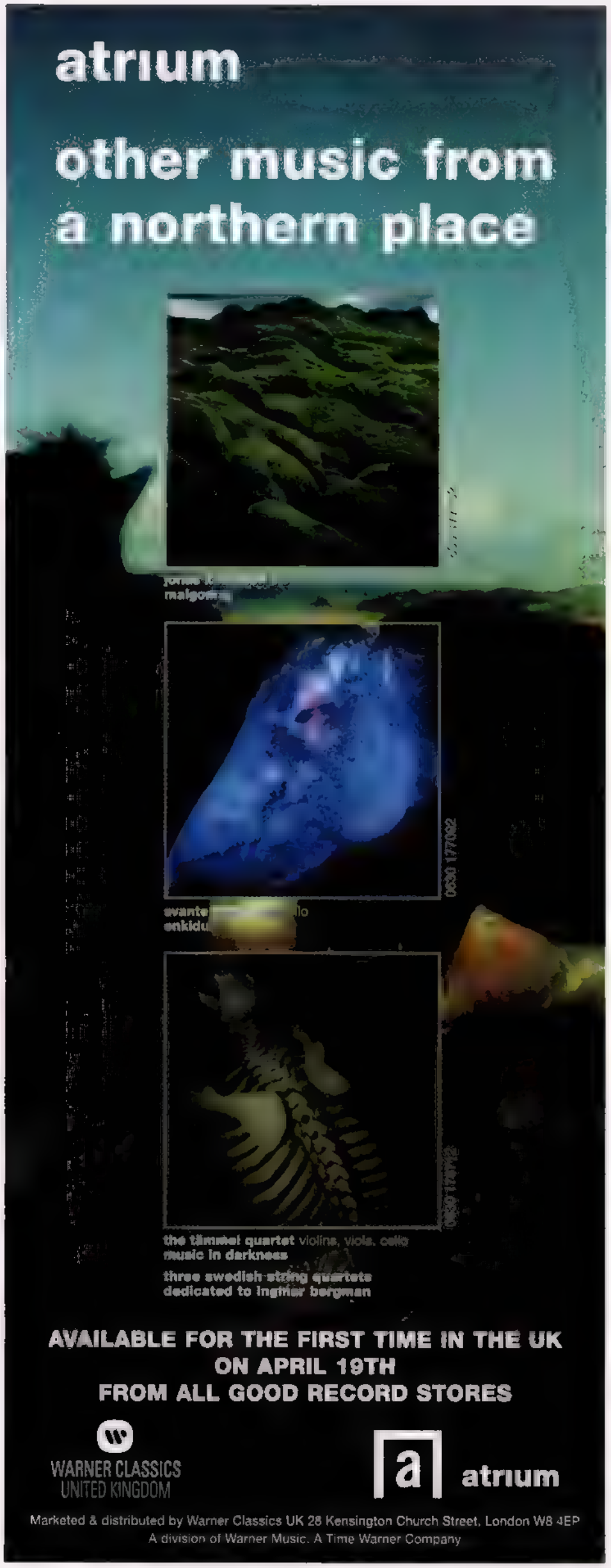
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bites

Acid Mothers Temple

Eight miles high

"Knowledge without experience is worthless," asserts Japanese guitarist and psychedelic speed guru, Makoto Kawabata "We dream of recreating the universe through the secret power of music."

Harbouring such a grand ambition, it's no wonder Kawabata goes at it fulltime The famous Japanese work ethic is just as prevalent in the underground as it is in mainstream corporate culture, it seems With a dozen or so different groups currently on the go, a world tour in the offing, a cottage industry CD-R label, and a clutch of upcoming releases on US and European labels, no one could accuse Kawabata of being a slacker Living in Nagoya, geographically — and culturally — about midway between Tokyo and Osaka, Kawabata's music forges links between the usually self-contained and very different scenes of the two cities After starting out in the late 70s Osaka scene, playing

Makoto Kawabata. Far left: some Acid Mothers

in groups such as Erochika and the obscure Boredoms antecedent Headache, in the 90s he joined forces with Tokyo's equally industrious Asahito Nanjo in the incendiary rock groups Musica Transonic and Mainliner Kawabata's splattered guitar riffs and frenetic soloing in those groups incorporates both the jumpcut whackiness of the Osaka sound and the darker edge of the Tokyo psychedelic underground

More recently he has been concentrating on his own projects The UK appearance a couple of years ago of Kawabata's self-described "millennial hippy group" Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso UFO (in this case, UFO standing for Underground Freak Out), provided yet another glimpse of how the history of Western psychedelia had been ingested and reconfigured in Japan Their first, self-titled album, released on Tokyo's PSF label, was a pulsating aural mandala that encompassed dense, careering rock, space-damaged synth float, and references to Tibetan mysticism The just-released second album, *Pataphysical Freak Out MUII*, goes even further out, with the addition of medieval hurdy-gurdy and an unlikely appearance from ex-After Dinner vocalist Haco Both Acid Mothers records musically and visually reference Gong and Hawkwind Speaking from the midst of a Japanese tour with his new hard rock group, Nishi-Nihon, Kawabata confesses his love of these greatest of dippy spacerock groups, but adds that one of his aims is to go beyond the usual technical gimmickry of the genre, and create "a sound that really achieves levitation the ultimate trip record"

Many of his groups have been released on Kawabata's own Acid Mothers Temple label, which has been churning out home-burned CD-Rs in editions of 100 for about a year now Kawabata describes the theme of the label as "trip music", but cautions that "trip music exists in many different forms, and doesn't just mean psychedelic rock" His releases bear him out, ranging from Floating Flower's tabla-dropping acid folk, and the ambient wash of the "virtual trip chill-out guitar unit" Uchu, to the tranced Fushitsusha-like rock group Tsurubami and Kawabata's own real-time improvisations on electric drone guitar and sarangi Imminent releases include a compilation by "psychedelic trad unit from hell" Zoffy, a duo with San Franciscan Mason Jones, and the second album by Uchu

The CDs themselves come in gorgeously psychedelic jackets, reminiscent of classic Gong and Hawkwind artwork, designed by Kawabata's sister My favourite to date is the gatefold sleeve for the mysterious Father Moo & The Black Sheep, which features a barechested Kawabata in a cloak and laserbeam eyes, frolicking in a field with three naked female acolytes What drives his excessive output? "I look upon my solo guitar work and other improvised projects as fresh food," he answers, "if I don't get them out there straight away, they start to go off" Speed of turnaround was his main motive for the tiny pressing sizes, rather than any desire to inspire collector-frenzy Initially, he admits, he feared they wouldn't even be able to sell that many Fortunately his doubts proved ungrounded, and most of the label's early releases have sold out

Inspired by more than just the art and sounds of the hippy era, Kawabata describes both the label and the Acid Mothers Temple group as a gathering of like minds, in his words, a "soul collective" A disparate collection of musicians, artists, dancers, farmers and others less easily pigeonholed, the collective has forged links with the environmentalist beatnik community in the Nagano mountains, and other such communities around the world Kawabata's description of the collective's activities reveals more than a touch of 60s utopianism "When we aren't working in order to scrape together a little cash to live on," he concludes, "we gather together around a fire, talk, sing songs, fish, grow vegetables, listen to music We live a natural life" **ALAN CUMMINGS** Pataphisical Freak Out MUII *is out now on PSF Acid Mothers play Glasgow 13th Note Cafe on 2 May*

MAIN PHOTO ADAM HORSWILL

Phil Durrant

Worship the glitch

For a few days in early May, the cavernous Gothic shell of the former St Pancras hotel, at London's St Pancras station, will be invaded by The Seven Sisters Group, performing choreographer Susanne Thomas's *Salome* to Phil Durrant's animated electronic soundtrack. As an improvisor of 22 years' standing, violinist and electronics operator Durrant, like the degraded St Pancras building, has worn a misleading facade for some time — much to his chagrin. "It's changing now," he says, after a tour of the hotel's dank chambers, which have stood empty since 1925, "but I think I've been perceived as a 'plinky-plonk' improvisor, by association."

Well, it's not altogether surprising: with his acoustic violin, Durrant has established himself in various groupings typically — for European Improv — named after their constituent parts, among them John Butcher/John Russell; Thomas Lehn/Radu Malfatti; and a quartet with Rhodri Davies/Berkard Beins/Michael Renkel. However, Durrant also confesses to a passion for what he dubs the "glitch digitritus" and "potentiometer protests" of the kind of distressed computer musics and live electronics generated by the Mego label, Pan Sonic, Oval and Microstoria. Acting on this passion, in 1997 he joined MIMEO (Music In Movement Electronic Orchestra), a pan-European ensemble of Improv and electronica heads.

"The violin is something I use to make music, but I'm not glorifying it," he explains. "I see myself as a musician in three separate areas: acoustic violin; violin and electronics; and then purely electronics. They're three rooms that have connecting corridors — much like some of the rooms in St Pancras."

Those 'pure' electronics have recently been heard to stunning effect on the *Secret Measures* CD, a duo recording with saxophonist John Butcher released by the American Wobbly Rail label. Durrant's febrile sound manoeuvres both capture and release Butcher's saxtones, blasting open the texture of a 'phutted' saxnote to create a bed for Butcher to lie in. "I don't think I'm going to become one of the Powerbook mafia," laughs Durrant, "but I do bring grunge and grit into it. I've deliberately chosen not to do live sampling. Sometimes I use a delay, which is a freeze, kind of like sampling him, but I rarely use that."

Instead, Durrant has modelled his digital set-up on the semi-controlled, but unstable feedback systems that live electronics expert David Tudor used to cultivate pieces such as *Rainforest*. "He had various modules that would feed back on each other, and how he treated each individual module would alter how things were feeding back," Durrant explains. "That's what I'm exploring at the moment — it's an inherent soundworld that's already happening, but I'm injecting a signal which pushes it somewhere else."

Phil Durrant is no johnny-come-lately to microprocessing. From 1988-92 he worked with a number of London's pioneering dance music producers and labels. A chance meeting with the Language label's Tony Thorpe led to Durrant programming for Thorpe's Moody Boyz. Releases followed on breakbeat label Shut Up And Dance, Confusion and Rumour, some under the name Mystical Units. But this aspect of his career foundered on his uncredited work on Fabio and Grooverider's first single. "The A-side was a real collaboration," asserts Durrant, "but Groove[illegible] would deny that. We ended up falling out, because he said things like we were just the engineers. . . Interesting times, though. I did withdraw from Improv a little bit; also, the scene in London was very cliquey — each venue had its own association of musicians and there was a lot of backbiting. It was refreshing to do this dance thing, where there was a community spirit in those days — before crack came on the scene."

Durrant went back to his violin, but was impressed a few years later by the "threatening Ambient" of Thomas Köner, Pan Sonic and others. In its scaled down sound aesthetic, this new-strain electronica came close to what Durrant was trying to achieve with Berlin musicians like trumpeter Axel Dörner, trombonist Radu Malfatti and synth player Thomas Lehn, who were teasing out a more intimate but no less concentrated form of existential music making. "The Berlin scene is the acoustic equivalent of Bernhard Günter," says Durrant, referring to the German artist whose digital compositions are less audible than falling snow. "Radu is the godfather of this, and they're also taking influences from Alvin Lucier and Morton Feldman, exploring very quiet music, lots of space, challenging people's conceptions of 'When is the climax coming?' It never does. It's about creating different kinds of tensions."

Durrant finds parallels between developing an intimate knowledge of an acoustic instrument and the microscopic electronic meditations of an artist like Vienna's Christian Fennesz. "When you're playing acoustically you're programming prior to the performance," he says. "The way I like working is putting stuff under a microscope, homing in on a sound, and then really working on it. I think musicians from the Techno scene have always had a lot to show the electroacoustic and acousmatic people. They're living with their instruments, and we can hear it in the music. I feel the inner workings of the brain being pulled into the sounds; it's getting inside the body: the sound of the blood coursing round the veins and the nervous system."

Durrant's other regular groups include Ticklish (with Kev Hopper and Richard Sanderson) and a quartet with Pat Thomas, Gail Brand and Mark Sanders, who all share what Durrant calls a "pop sensibility" in the way they present their music. But he's increasingly drawn towards collaborations with dance groups, such as *Salome*. "With dance, you're working to some kind of brief," Durrant explains. "It makes you think of atmospheres and ideas that you wouldn't get from improvisation. And choreographers can actually talk; not just about their work, but how they're feeling personally." **ROB YOUNG**

Salome is at London St Pancras Chambers between 29 April–2 May: see Soundings

PHOTO: NIK STRANGELOVE

Basement Jaxx

House that Jaxx built

Without fanfare, House has crept forward to become the leading edge of dance culture again — just like it was over a decade ago. It's managed to sidestep the grim purist rut that's ensnared much minimal Techno and drum 'n' bass; rather than getting paranoid about stylistic contamination, contemporary House is pragmatically open to outside influence. Slyly, it assimilates rhythmatic and texturological tricks from overtly experimental forms of electronica, then resituates them in a juicier pleasure-principled context. The music of South London duo Basement Jaxx is so promiscuously impurist it should really be dubbed The Genre Formerly Known As House.

The first three EPs by Jaxx boys Felix Buxton and Simon Ratcliffe were lumped in with the mid-90s wave of Nu House, featuring British outfits such as Faze Action and Idjut Boys. But Buxton and Ratcliffe soon got fed up with that scene's snobbish fetish for authenticity, the obsession with reproducing the sound of 'loft classics' (disco productions by Larry Levan and Francois Kevorkian that played at New York underground clubs in the 1970s and early 80s).

"Nu House was good at first," says Ratcliffe, "but it quickly became dull and smug: 'We know what the cool records are, we're replicating them, and isn't it groovy?'" Having rapidly achieved their initial goal — mastering the skills of contemporary US House auteurs they admired [illegible]sters At Work and Mood II Swing — Basement Jaxx were hungry for new challenges. "In the beginning we were just trying to be House producers," says Ratcliffe. "Now we're trying *not* to be House producers."

The Genre Formerly Known As House tag fits because Prince and his balancing act of identity through constant flux is an aesthetic model for Basement Jaxx. Their debut album *Remedy* recalls Prince's *Sign O' The Times* in its insanely detailed production, compulsive stylistic hybridity, and warped vocal multitrackings. Ideas that other producers might spin out for entire tracks occur as sonic singularities, gratuitous one-offs. "We want you to hear something different each time you listen," says Ratcliffe. "Hopefully we don't over-confuse people by putting too many things in. Then again, you want to be slightly *baffled* by music, don't you?"

Remedy's most disconcerting moment might be the point in "Same Old Show" where the listener realises the tune pivots around a sample from The Selecter's "On My Radio" — a short phrase of eerie vocal counterpoint brilliantly isolated from its perky Two-Tone context and looped to monstrously mantric effect. A protest against the formulaic homogeneity of dance music, "Same Old Show" gets its message across as much through its sound as the *"It's just the same old show"* sample. "There's a kind of ugliness to it," decides Ratcliffe. "A lot of the original Chicago House was done by people who really weren't that *musical*, in the traditional sense. But the wrongness gave it a real excitement. It's good not to be too safe about being in tune or having correct timing. "Same Old Show" isn't about musical cohesion — it's about energy and oddness."

Basement Jaxx: Felix Buxton and Simon Ratcliffe

Waxing lyrical about the scuzz appeal of Camberwell, where the duo's studio is based, compared with its (relatively) chic neighbour Brixton, Ratcliffe says the Jaxx are "anti-style. . . Our music's saying 'fuck off' to things everyone thinks are cool" In this Camberwell spirit, the Jaxx put a deliberate record-skipping effect into "Yo Yo", another *Remedy* stand-out. Combined with a simultaneous bassline change, the skip, says Buxton, "makes you feel like everything's slipped It's great because it's like a *new sensation*. And that's a bit of our jazz attitude — like Coltrane pushing his instrument, doing things that initially sounded totally wrong, and it's only later you realise 'that was music all along' "

Ratcliffe describes the Jaxx methodology as "freestyling, we freestyle in our programming" The duo jam with their machines to create moments like the strobing, wobbly-fingers-in-your-earhole effect in "Razo-Caine" (a bonus track on the re-released "Red Alert" single). "With that, I was playing the samples live on the keyboard and pitchbending them," explains Buxton. "Simultaneously Simon's EQing what I'm doing on the desk, putting effects on them, and placing them within the track."

Where Buxton's musical trajectory is orientated around club culture, Ratcliffe's background has oscillated wildly — from playing guitar in jazz funk groups to making Hardcore rave tunes under the name Tic Tac Toe. Fondly recalling the days when his breakbeat anthem "Ephemeral" got remixed by Fabio, Groovender and Mickey Finn, Ratcliffe describes 'Ardkore as a positive example of "the technology taking over And it was so *English* — unsophisticated, full of attitude and energy They used illegal samples, made vocals so high they sounded ridiculous — but it worked. It's that same punk spirit that we're trying to incorporate into our music."

Indeed, Basement Jaxx call what they do 'punk Garage'. This nicely punning inversion suggests a spiritual kinship with Speed Garage — a smooth 'n' sexy New York sound ruffed up with English attitude Like London's underground Garage crews, Basement Jaxx brilliantly combine songful musicality and trackhead FX-mania, human fluency and machinic angularity; high production values and digital dirt; jazz and punk. In the past they've swung back and forth on a song by song basis, but now they're meshing extremes inside the same track. Take "Don't Give Up", simultaneously *Remedy*'s most accomplished and deranged track — a Sturm und Drang ballad reeling between Scott Walker strings and nauseously billowing Acid bass. It's about how you can dig yourself a hole by thinking too deeply the chorus beseeches, *"Don't pull the cracks in your mind apart"*. And it reflects the trepidation Jaxx felt as they started recording *Remedy* "We were on this precipice, looking down," recalls Ratcliffe "We'd talk a lot about what we should be doing. That song is like us saying, 'Let's just get on with it' So instead of working our way up to it, we did did the most experimental track first. It was us forgetting about dance music altogether." **SIMON REYNOLDS**

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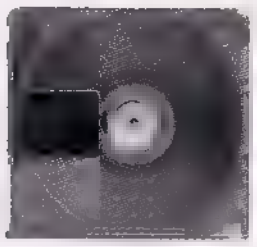

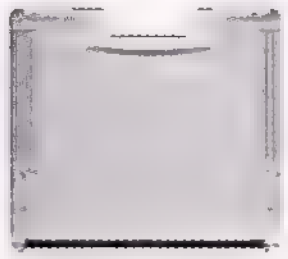

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Richard Pinhas

Planting brain bombs

"Gilles Deleuze? He was a close friend of mine. He did the vocals on a piece of ours," reminisces Richard Pinhas, the guitarist and former leader of the cult 70s French group Heldon. Recording a song, "Le Voyageur", with one of the most influential philosophers of the end of the century is no mean feat in itself, but it's not the only achievement that Pinhas will be remembered for. Heldon's career spanned only six years, from 1973–79, but in that time the group's explosive mix of radical politics, philosophical notions and sci-fi imagery produced a strain of electronic music that still sounds unique.

At the end of 1997, Pinhas, who is now approaching 50, revived Heldon, and the group recorded an album entitled *Only Chaos Is Real*, for which Pinhas is currently seeking a label. Meanwhile, he has formed an alliance with the American sci-fi author Norman Spinrad and the French techno-punk novelist Maurice Dantec, both of whom contribute spoken texts to Pinhas's latest solo release, *Schizotrope*, which also features unpublished Deleuzian texts recited by the late theorist.

Pinhas first read Spinrad, and his contemporary Philip K Dick, back in the mid-60s. "These writers had an enormous impact on me because of the way they questioned reality and opened up possibilities," he says. Indeed, Heldon took their name from the mythical land in Spinrad's novel *The Iron Dream*. "The fact that Spinrad and Dantec are part of the group is very important," he continues, "because as writers they are concerned with the written medium, with politics and with [current] events."

In May 1968, when the streets of Paris exploded with riots and demonstrations, Pinhas was a schoolboy militant, but by the time he formed Heldon in 1973, music, not bricks, had become his means of contesting social and political realities. The notion might appear naive today, but back in the 70s, as revolutionary ideas flourished like wildfire, the ideal of a new society didn't seem so far away. "There was a lot going on in France in the period following May 68, and music was very closely intertwined with the cultural and political effervescence of that time," reflects Pinhas. "And of course people were very open and receptive to all those new developments."

Like other anarcho-musical communes that sprang up throughout Western Europe in the early 70s — Faust, Amon Düül, Henry Cow — Heldon expressed their commitment to revolutionary causes in a variety of ways: by releasing a free single in support of the German Red Army Faction; taking part in politically orientated festivals; and controlling the release of their own music. "We were one of the first groups to militate against the [commercial] circuits by recording our music at home. Our first record sold for very little and that was a deliberate political choice on our part," remarks Pinhas.

The title of that first album, *Electronic Guerilla*, was inspired by William S Burroughs's cut-up text *The Electronic Revolution*. Meanwhile, the music, which was produced using a guitar, two Revox tape recorders and a synthesizer, had parallels with the new systems music of Robert Fripp and Brian Eno (Fripp is one of the major influences on Pinhas's music; Heldon's second album, *Allez Teia*, included a track dedicated to the King Crimson leader). "Machines were very important to me in those days, because they opened up new possibilities," comments Pinhas, adding, "Our success was probably due to the fact that we combined synthesizers with live drums. You don't get the same interaction with machines as you do with musicians, which is why I was very attached to the idea of having a drummer play alongside the synth loops. Then there was also our rock outlook, whereas other [electronic] musicians at the time wanted to get as far away from rock 'n' roll as possible."

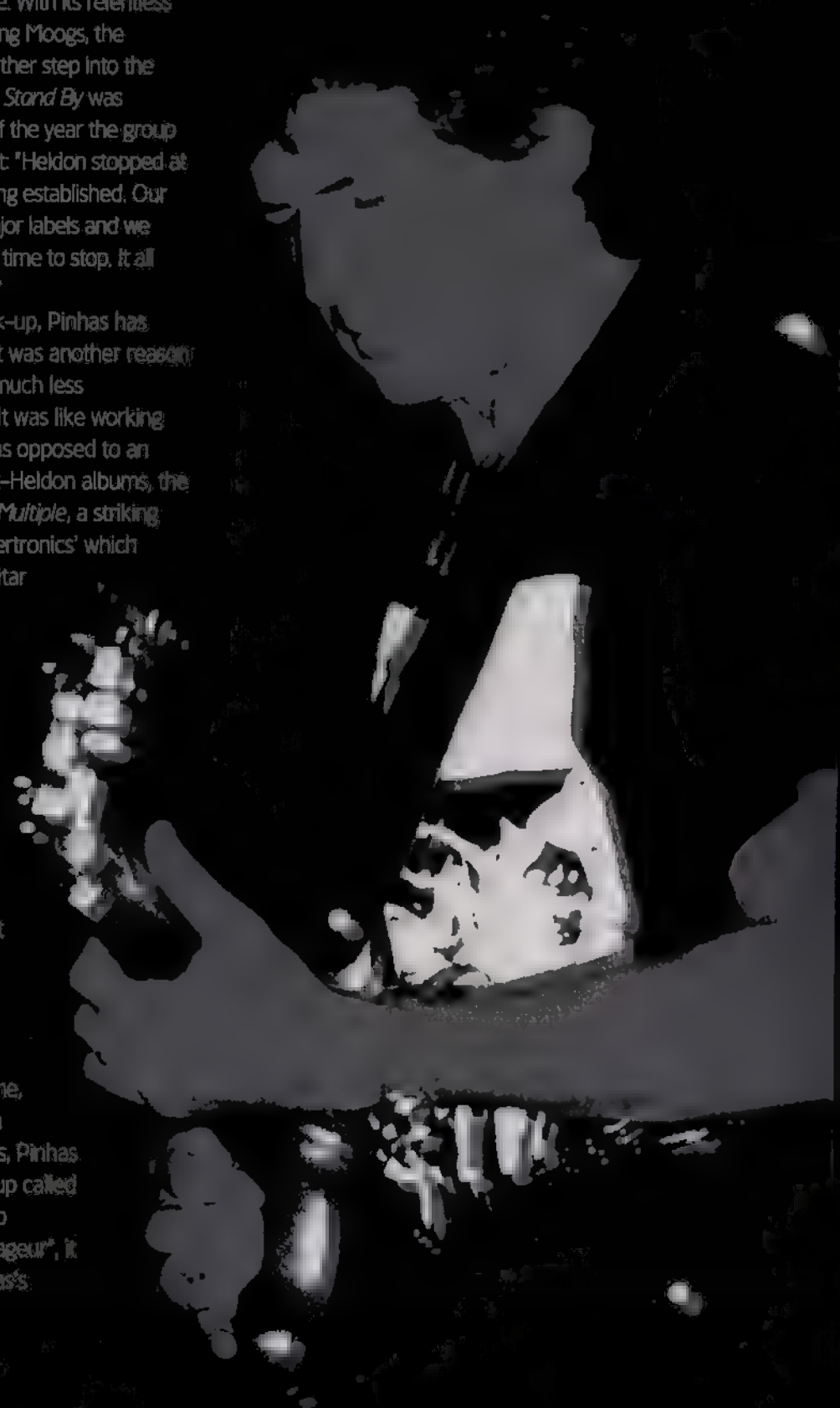
Heldon's music had always been shot through with an undercurrent of violence, a kind of glacial, metallic implacability, which gradually became more overt. In 1976 the group released *Un Rêve Sans Conséquence Spéciale* (*A Dream Of No Special Consequence*), which drew parallels with Throbbing Gristle. With its relentless machine rhythms and angry sounding Moogs, the following album, *Interface*, was a further step into the Industrial darkness. The apocalyptic *Stand By* was released in 1979, but by the end of the year the group had disbanded. As Pinhas explains it: "Heldon stopped at the right time, just as it was becoming established. Our records were being released on major labels and we were beginning to do well, so it was time to stop. It all went back to [the spirit] of May 68."

In the years since Heldon's break-up, Pinhas has been nurturing a solo career. "That was another reason I stopped Heldon, because it was much less constraining to make solo abums. It was like working with a chamber music ensemble, as opposed to an orchestra," he explains. Of his post-Heldon albums, the most memorable is *De L'Un Et Du Multiple*, a striking and highly personal take on 'Frippertronics' which features a series of evanescent guitar pieces created using digital delays. "It's the same guitar and the same kind of sound from beginning to end, but I attack the note in a certain way and let it die in a certain way and I create a kind of cosmic rhythm," Pinhas explains, adding: "Fripp wrote me a very nice letter about it. . ."

Pinhas's solo career has given him time to develop his concurrent interests. The holder of a PhD in philosophy, he has always considered that music and philosophy are intrinsically related; as he puts it: "Concepts such as time, duration and repetition also have a bearing on sound." In the early 70s, Pinhas formed a short-lived jazz rock group called Schizo, whose second single was to become a classic. Entitled "Le Voyageur", it featured the solemn voice of Pinhas's mentor Gilles Deleuze reciting Nietzsche's famous aphorism on the vicissitudes of life. Likewise, his 1982 album, *L'Ethique*, which also featured Deleuze's voice, took a text by Spinoza as its starting point; while his 1977 solo album, *Rhizosphère*, was an early attempt to apply Deleuze's notion of the rhizome (essentially a lateral non-hierarchical network) to music. The release of *Schizotrope*, which again features Pinhas's custom 'tronic guitar' technique, continues the lineage.

Recently, Pinhas has forged working alliances with other European composer-mavericks such as Pascal Comelade and Peter Frohmader. But he seems ill at ease in today's mediated world, and there is the slightest trace of regret in his voice when he refers to the past: "Rock music was still an adventure in those days. There were few people doing it and it was like a cottage industry. Today it's become big business."

RAMMA KHAZAM Schizotrope *is released this month on Sub Rosa. Heldon's back catalogue has been reissued by Spalax. Thanks to Jérôme Schmidt*



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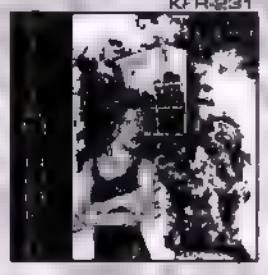

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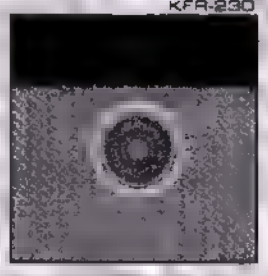

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Victoria, British Columbia

That obnoxious power saw is still whining away next door, but I'm trying hard to experience the sound as Stuart Dempster would. I first met the trombonist and composer six years ago in his office at the University of Washington's School of Music, from where he has just retired after teaching there for 30 years. When he turned in his seat to reach for a book, his chair screeched. I cringed, he grinned. . . and slowly rocked back and forth, varying his chair's cadence and tone, playing it like a musical instrument.

For the free solo concert he gave in February at the University of Victoria in British Columbia on Canada's west coast, his sound sources were marginally more conventional: trombone, didgeridoo, garden hose and conch shell. Without a word, he walked onstage and began turning in circles while playing *Didjeridervish* (1971-72), a work showcasing the didgeridoo's voice, harmonics and Doppler effect.

Throughout the evening he played an 'American indigenous' didgeridoo, which he'd devised from a length of plastic sewer pipe. "It's lighter, more abstract and I like its pinging sound," he explained, comparing it with the traditional Australian version made of eucalyptus wood hollowed out by white ants or termites. He originally became interested in the instrument in 1967, when the late composer Robert Erickson handed him a one-minute tape of didgeridoo music, from which Dempster taught himself how to play. Six years later, a Fulbright scholarship at the University of Victoria in Melbourne gave him the opportunity to study with Australian Aborigine teachers on the Barnyili Reserve, near Katherine, and in Eastern Arnhem Land.

But it wasn't until 1982 that Dempster fully recognised the instrument's calming, restorative qualities. By then he was working with accordionist Pauline Oliveros, whom he had first met in 1954 at San Francisco State College. Independent of Dempster, she too had been exploring the healing aspects of music and listening. "Unlike with the trombone, I feel better when I play the didgeridoo," Dempster said. "The required circular breathing is a lot like doing yoga."

Didjeridervish was composed as part of *Ten Grand Hosery* for ten grand pianos, garden hoses and dancer. For his Victoria performance, he contented himself to blowing down a single garden hose with a trombone mouthpiece that ran into a pedal-blocked, resonating piano. "I'm always listening for reverb," Dempster said,

sitting crosslegged, looking like the hookah-puffing caterpillar from *Alice In Wonderland*.

Upon arrival, Dempster had noted the acoustic characteristics of the venue and adjusted his performance accordingly. In *Acuhosery*, excerpted from *Sound Massage Parlor* (1986), he deployed garden hose as an 'acupressure' instrument, while he meandered through the hall, snake-charming our ears, arms and backs, and joking about runaway spittle.

The right space also encourages audience participation. "Throw me a pitch," Dempster prompted, wielding his didgeridoo like a baseball bat. He then began improvising over our E-flat humming, some people sitting with eyes closed and palms up, while others 'ommed' along or sang harmony. By now, we were no longer just an audience, but an integral part of a meditative and interactive process.

We were sufficiently primed for the self-explanatory *Didjeriatsu*, again from *Sound Massage Parlor*. A female audience volunteer sat her aching middle-aged body onstage while we sang an E and Dempster played a harmonic progression designed to "smooth her aura to relieve her pain", in the composer's words. Going by the vigour of her walk back to her seat, it must have worked.

Dempster later recalled the abandoned underground water cistern, in Port Townsend, Washington's Fort Worden State Park, where he, Oliveros and vocalist/electroacoustic composer Panaiotis accidentally formed the Deep Listening Band in 1988 (see their New Albion CD, *Deep Listening*). "Acoustically, with its cement walls and 45 second reverb, it behaves like a very supportive audience," said Dempster. Though it is sealed off by two concrete-filled metal drums, which have to be removed by backhoe to gain entry, the cistern is available, by permission, only to the seriously musical.

I've been down in the cistern three times now, once when Dempster and nine trombone students recorded *Underground Overlays From The Cistern Chapel* (1995, New Albion), which formed part of the score for choreographer Merce Cunningham's *Ground Level Overlay*. During the Victoria concert, Dempster played *Melodic Communion* and *Shell Shock* from the CD, while he tromboned through the aisles and blew through his conch shell into the piano. By the time he concluded the evening with *Timepiece* (1998), it all seemed to come together — Dempster's improvisational compositions, the hall's released architectural intimacy and the spectators' near-transcendent immersion. His didgeridoo droned a C with added voice a fifth above and, once again, the audience joined in. "I felt we were brushing up against a higher spiritual level there," Dempster commented later. "Maybe not moving to the sacred, although that's what I'd like my music to reach.

"I can't stress enough the importance of listening," he added, during a masterclass delivered to 30 'brassholes and de-composers'. "You never know where you'll find music." **CLAIRE SYKES**

PHOTOS: MARIN DE VALK

Here and above: Stu Dempster in Victoria

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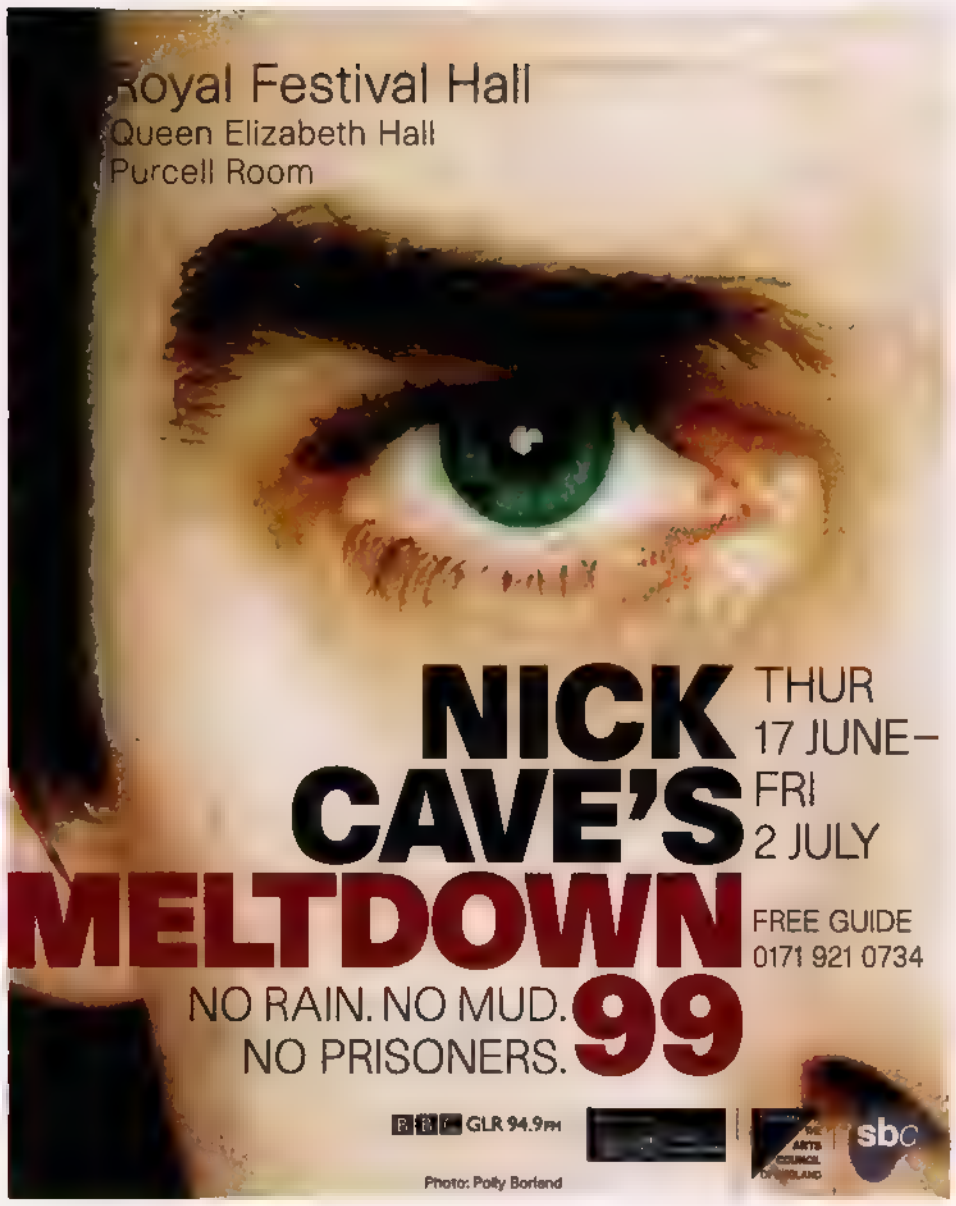
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CARGO RECORDS

A new generation of lounge lizards is rediscovering the future through his Jerry Cotton crime soundtracks: reflect Europe's post-war fascination

reversing

German composer **Peter Thomas**'s music for the 60s sci-fi series *Space Patrol*. Meanwhile, with US pulp. Words: Ken Hollings. Photography: Fredrick B Clement

into tomorrow

Clear winter sunlight streams in through the windows of a Thai restaurant somewhere in West London. A waitress is preparing to serve the first course on the day's set menu. "Spring roll?" she offers, her voice a soft murmur. "Spring roll?" Peter Thomas replies, eyes flashing, as if her tentative inquiry had actually been an order. "Why should I?" Then he smiles and giggles. We are all hurtling together through an expanding cosmos, travelling at thousands of miles per second. "You know," he says, "it's the same when someone says spring is in the air. How high do they mean?" Now 73, Peter Thomas has one of those guileless, lunar faces that manage to remain unaffected by the pull of gravity or the passing of the years. The wilder his puns and confusions over meaning become, the more innocent his facial expression.

Like the man himself, his music seems to emanate from a different dimension, a parallel universe in which space travel is made possible simply by shifting the existing scenery around a little, and the recording studio has become a fully functioning time machine whose destination lies simultaneously in the past and the future. Peter Thomas belongs to that post-war generation of backroom boys who combined a formal music training with a fascination for the new and innovative, while never forgetting to keep the customer satisfied. The movie soundtracks, TV themes and library music which they created had a strange functional beauty capable of transforming sex and violence into the staple requirements of modern urban living, and the dark mysteries of the cosmos into the choicest of consumer items.

To write an accompaniment to events that haven't happened yet for people who don't exist is also to admit that things are not what they seem. Nothing is real, all is permitted. Sound travels through a vacuum. In space, the screaming gets dubbed on afterwards. Thanks to Peter Thomas, no symphony orchestra ever need set foot on the moon again.

When speaking English, Thomas brings a fractured, energetic poetry to his choice of words. His hands are kept constantly busy, sketching shapes and ideas in the air, following imaginary melody lines, rapping out rhythms on the tabletop. Once set in motion, however, anecdotes tend to disappear down conversational wormholes or allow themselves to be dragged into orbit around some formally unrelated topic. Even the most basic biographical details can send him spinning away on strange new tangents. "The terrible thing is you're born," he says. "Why? How long?" He shakes his head, as if marveling that anyone could still be concerned with such things. "It spends time for nothing."

Born in 1925 in Breslau — since 1945 the Polish city, Wroclaw — Peter Thomas was raised in Berlin, where he first started taking piano lessons at the age of five from his grandfather, a military bandleader. After the war, with the city divided up into four sectors, he found work playing in the various Allied officers' clubs. "This is the first time as a German you could hear music from other countries," Thomas explains. "Like a baby, I hear music of another kind." Most exciting of all were the big bands he heard on British and American forces' radio and in the 'hit kits' regularly supplied to the US sector. Thomas taught himself by ear to play for the occupying troops the music he was listening to on their radio networks. "They'd ask for titles like "Night And Day"," he recalls. "I don't know what that is but I must play it the way the Americans want to hear it." Meanwhile, he continued to study composition, counterpoint and conducting, eventually working in the studios of Berlin radio station RIAS during the 1950s. The result was a solid grounding in musical colouring and dynamics. "I know what is fantastic and sexy with a big band," he asserts. "I never orient myself on others. I fight my own battles on the subject of music."

Knowing his own mind inevitably led to conflicts. Classically trained musicians especially objected to him combining electric guitars with an orchestra. Yet it was Thomas's early experiments with amplified sound that taught him a great deal about basic studio technique, including how to position microphones and balance sound sources for live recordings. Rather than resorting to electronic effects, the space age sparkle and futuristic sounds found in his music were often achieved by carefully blended arrangements using conventional instruments. But then technological innovation has never really followed the established canons of taste. "My whole life I have two chairs," Thomas comments. "This chair is pop, this chair is serious, and I am always between them. Then to live life, I have to make a bridge between them." Film and television were to provide his main supports.

Noise killers and special agents

In the 1950s, when Thomas began composing and arranging soundtracks, the domestic German film industry had not yet recovered from the Nazi-induced exodus to Hollywood of its finest directors and technicians. Relying heavily upon box-office conscious producers to revive its flagging fortunes, the industry aimed for the broadest popular appeal. Adapting a successful novel was always considered a safe bet, especially when the state handed out funding for films based upon the presentation of a finished screenplay. Hence such wild, genre-based swingers as jungle goddess *Liane*, a late 50s rewrite of the Edgar Rice Burroughs Tarzan legend which offered audiences bare flesh and exotic escapism in about equal measure. Crime fiction, as Rialto Films showed with their cycle of Edgar Wallace pictures, also paid off big time. Between 1959 and 1972, 32 Wallace titles were released, netting the company more than 140 million marks. No surprise then that Thomas got his big break on a Wallace production, *Die Seltsame Gräfin*, in 1961. He went on to contribute a further 18 soundtracks to the series. By the mid-60s, he was also scoring German Westerns, based mostly upon the frontier yarns of Karl May — an adventure author whose Kipling-like authenticity was undermined by the

revelation that he had never been to America — but also including a strange take on Fenimore Cooper in *Der Letzte Mohikaner*

In creating his soundtracks, Thomas made a conscious decision not to read any of the original novels, nor to start before seeing a rough cut of the film itself. "What is first, the music or the film?" he shrugs, then smiles. "The producer makes his own rules. I prefer to see the film like a child in the cinema. Then I feel immediately what the rule is." To Thomas, it was a simple matter of logistics. "You know what the purpose of film music is?" he asks. "In the silent movies, you could hear the apparatus. The projector was so loud, you could hear it in the whole room. So they look for a pianist who plays louder." He demonstrates by hammering noisily on the table. "Some of the things that get played are very wrong, but an intelligent player can play something a little bit like the scene. So now I'm here." Thomas laughs, spreading his hands. "I think the film composer is a noise killer."

In 1965 Peter Thomas met his match in FBI Man Jerry Cotton, a classic pulp creation from German publishers Bastei-Lubbe, which made its screen debut in *Schusse Aus Der Geigenkasten*, the first of eight pictures released in rapid succession until the close of the decade. A gun-toting tough guy, special agent Cotton inhabited a weird afterhours version of New York that could only ever have existed in the movies. He drank bourbon, hung out in night clubs, romanced showgirls and chased hoods all over town without ever spoiling the line of his immaculately tailored suits. In essence, Cotton was the German counterpart to FBI operative Lemmy Caution, the literary creation of the British Olympic fencing champion Peter Cheyney. Caution had appeared in a number of French crime movies during the 1950s, played by gruff expatriate Yankee Eddie Constantine. Hollywood actor George Nader was brought in to play Cotton. A ruggedly handsome Californian, Nader had previously received top billing in Phil Tucker's 3D schlock masterpiece *Robot Monster* and had taken the lead in the American primetime TV adaptation of the Ellery Queen mysteries. "He did pretty good for himself," Eddie Constantine remarked of him later. "He'd have done even better if he'd been a little ugly like me."

"If you ask a young boy what is the difference between a violin and a double bass, do you know what he says? The bass burns longer"

Playing up the comic strip aspects of the Jerry Cotton stories, Peter Thomas created a wild, colourful mix of musical styles and effects. Recorded live in the studio, his expansive horn arrangements were augmented by tinkling cocktail lounge pianos, crooning female choruses and Latin percussion. Scat singers were permitted to clash with bursts of machine gun fire against a background of accelerating sports cars and spinning roulette wheels, while electric organs and Tyrolean strings fight it out in the lobby. A central theme, "The Jerry Cotton March", is reworked in a range of popular styles, from fake George Shearing to low-rent beat club and K-Mart Ray Conniff — Robert Altman deployed the same device to witty effect with the title tune of *The Long Goodbye*. "I think it's very powerful," Thomas says of his Jerry Cotton material, "because all of it is live recordings. It comes from the first minute. For film music you must have a basic lightness. Normally I write all the music, but with the best freedom for the drummer to play what he wants, only the accents. The guitarist must also be free to play. But the effect is only possible if you play together."

Essentially a form of film *noir* without shadows, the special agent genre belonged to a mythical American past, located somewhere deep in the European imagination. As such, its days were strictly numbered. Look what happened to Lemmy Caution. When Jean-Luc Godard brought Constantine back to play him one last time in *Alphaville*, it was only to send him on an intergalactic journey to a city where love and individuality had been banned by order of technocratic dictator Von Braun. The countdown to the future had begun.

Moonshots and loonshots

"It is the year 3000. At an unimaginable velocity, a spaceship speeds through the universe. ." So began the original introduction to *Raumpatrouille* (*Space Patrol*), an ambitious, seven-part science fiction co-production made in Bavaria for broadcast on German and French TV. Filmed in 1966 and embracing the Cold War pipedreams of the period, *Raumpatrouille* is set against a phase in the planet's history when all political problems have been solved, and a single world government established. Having colonised the ocean floors as well as the neighbouring star systems, humanity now finds itself under constant threat from alien invaders. The Orion VIII has therefore been sent out to patrol the cosmos, "a small link in a security chain responsible for protecting the Earth from surprise attacks". Welcome to the paranoid utopia of the space age 60s.

"I have never read a book from space," Peter Thomas reveals, "So I don't know what's up there." Neither does anyone else when it comes to such serious issues as how music might sound on the moon. The future means less than zero if you don't have the means with which to replicate it. Space is the gap between your stereo speakers, the sound of tomorrow a panned illusion stretching from your left to right channel. In creating the main theme and incidental music for *Raumpatrouille*, Thomas modified his brash big band swing, adding strings from The Munich Philharmonic, a vocoder and Otto Weiss on Hammond organ. The result is a work of brash musical invention that conveys the impression that the galaxy is one vast glittering casino; a cosmic Caesar's Palace. Much of the futuristic shimmer and sparkle of these recordings is down to careful studio work by The Peter Thomas Sound-Orchester. The brass section is given a celestial edge by having female voices singing in unison delicately balanced against it. Woodwinds are played back over distorting amplifiers to rough them up a little. The Hammond is in constant motion throughout the mix, sometimes adding a metallic sheen to the harmonies or a striding R&B swagger to a main melody line.

Predating Apollo landings and modular synthesizers, the *Raumpatrouille* experiment was reminiscent of Dick Hyman's sonic explorations on the Lowrey organ and prepared piano for the LP *Moon Gas*, originally released in the US during the early 60s. Deep space represented uncharted terrain for the record industry, offering a whole new spectrum of atmospheres, colours and moods to its customers. Peter Thomas refers to 60s recording technology as "the future from yesterday", a shift in methods and practice which can no longer be replicated. "So many new things you cannot find," he laments of today's studio equipment. "Only from history. The same thing only ten times more expensive." Fine tuning an event that has already taken place, Dick Hyman later recorded the seminal Moog albums *The Electric Eclectics Of Dick Hyman* and *The Age Of Electronicus*. His epic, switched-on excursion, "The Minotaur", plus an unbelievably hopped-up cover version of James Brown's "Give It Up Or Turn It Loose", remain singular outposts in an unclaimed musical territory. Meanwhile, Peter Thomas went on to design and build his own synthesizer, a huge electronic monster boasting 12 separate generators, now on display in a Berlin museum.

The future seems to be receding from view before the countdown has even started. Think how different it all could have been, however, if Neil Armstrong had been listening to the strapping organ tones of "Moon Landing" from the *Raumpatrouille* soundtrack when he stepped out onto the lunar surface for the first time. As it was, Armstrong preferred to have Les Baxter's 10" 78 rpm release from the early 50s, *Music Out Of The Moon*, piped to him from mission control. An early attempt to blend a mellifluous 'invisible choir' of wordless voices with the theremin, *Music Out Of The Moon* was eventually followed by *Space Escapade*, in which Baxter's lush orchestrations managed to sound more earthbound than both the title and cover art had originally suggested. In the same way, Esquivel's 1958 album *Other Worlds, Other Sounds* concerned itself with setting acoustic space in motion, rather than in conjuring up alien dimensions. The sleevenotes for Bobby Christian's 1962 Audio Fidelity LP *Strings For A Space Age* made the connection between the two technologies even plainer: "The musical material is excitingly original and so varied in literally thousands of tonal and rhythmic ideas that it suggests a myriad number of visual images and motions man is wont to associate with present day information about outer space." An exhausting list of associations follows, including "cosmic wind, circular motion, jet thrust, luminescent coatings" and "stellar radiation". Was there a hi-fi system in existence powerful enough to cope with it all? The sooner mankind conquered the universe, the better.

Of equal thrust was the music created by those who claimed to have already been there. Released in the late 1950s, Howard Menger's *Authentic Music From Another Planet* featured a number of keyboard instrumentals which attempted to recreate songs first played to him by a man from Saturn. The originals were performed on some extraterrestial gizmo similar in construction to a piano but with 'extra keys' covered in strange markings. Even more startling were the raucous vaudeville singalongs to be found on *Into Outer Space With Lucia Pamela*. *"Eenie meenie, minie, moe,"* La Pamela cheerily confides, accompanying herself on a customised cinema organ, *"Moontown is the place to go."* She ought to know, having visited the place several times in her pink Cadillac.

Peter Thomas is evidently not alone when he admits to not knowing what goes on in the deep dark firmament and beyond. In this case, however, ignorance is a relatively plastic thing. Confidence can take you a large part of the way, and that is perhaps what characterises the vast majority of these musical explorations: the broad assurance that not only was something out there but that it would be worth finding. The same spirit could also be discovered in the sexy pop psychedelia of Bob Crewe's soundtrack to *Barbarella* and the inventive, kinetic scores which Barry Gray created

for Gerry Anderson's Century 21 Productions. By the end of the 60s, however, this mood had changed considerably. A particularly clear moment of transition occurred when Stanley Kubrick decided not to use any of Hollywood composer Alex North's music for *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Instead, he went for what is now listed as 'various classical'. The far reaches of the universe would never sound the same again.

Also sprach whatsisname

Some time around the mid-70s, Peter Thomas was in a New York recording studio listening to a disco version of the theme most closely associated with *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The arranger was pleased with the track but also seriously in awe of Richard Strauss's skills as a composer. "You know," he proudly confided in Peter Thomas, "this guy didn't just write waltzes. . . ." Thomas just smiles and shrugs. The opening of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* had always been in Kubrick's mind as a key element in the film's soundtrack. Alex North had even incorporated a paraphrase of its first few bars in his own lean, modernist score for the movie. The tone poem pushed the right buttons, conferring upon the universe a grandeur and gravitas that Kubrick obviously felt it had lacked up until that moment. Elvis Presley used to open his live shows with it, hooking his audiences into the magnitude of the occasion. However, the only time the king tried doing it disco style, the result threw his timing off for the entire show, sending him back to his Vegas hotel suite screaming for his medication.

Peter Thomas offered his own tribute to *2001* on "Opium", an ironically titled rephrasing of Strauss's original music played as a scalding trumpet solo over funky guitars and chiming keyboards. The track was recently reissued on *Moonflowers And Mini-Skirts*, a compilation of tracks recorded during the late 60s and early 70s for various projects, including the German television mini-series *11 Uhr 20* and *Happening In White*, a 1969 ski-bum pic directed by millionaire playboy, Gunther Sachs. Reflecting the glossy materialism of a time when radicalism and consumerism coexisted, these compositions have the flash and sparkle of a dancehall glitter ball. It was also a period that saw Thomas working with the new engineers of the social soundtrack, such as Lothar Meid from Amon Düül and electro pioneer Giorgio Moroder. He was also responsible for the first recorded vocal performance by Donna Summer, then appearing in the Munich production of *Hair* under the name Donna Gaines.

A whole new movie was taking shape in people's heads. Thomas describes Moroder pushing buttons in the studio, executing a one finger keyboard rendition of Giorgio/Chicory Tip's "Son Of My Father" in the air as he does so. "A homemade composer," Thomas recalls proudly, "very congenial, with quadrophonic ears." Moroder and Summer still had to survive two years of record industry indifference before "Love To Love You Baby" became an anthem at Studio 54. However, it was Silver Convention's "Hot Stuff", featuring string players from the Munich Philharmonic and a former Peter Thomas session drummer, that brought the disco loop to the US. "It was," according to Thomas, "as if Germany has sold Coca Cola to America." The future has strange ways of catching up with itself. It was, after all, the expertise of German rocket scientists, such as Werner Von Braun, Hermann Oberth and Willey Ley, that made the American journey into space possible in the first place. More than 30 years on, the music Thomas wrote to accompany the Orion VIII's high speed trip through the cosmos has a new audience, to whom it represents a greater and more expressive cultural reality than the actual 1960s space race ever could. For them, the dry electronic voice running through its emotionless countdown at the start of the main title sequence predates Kraftwerk's *Computer World* by a decade and a half. Once Pulp used horn arrangements sampled from *Raumpatrouille* on "This Is Hardcore", Peter Thomas found his circle of admirers growing exponentially. *Warp Back To Earth 66/99*, a recent remix project, gave the likes of Stereolab, St Etienne and Tortoise's John McEntire free access to 29 previously unreleased Thomas tracks from the 1960s. Peter Thomas has welcomed the results with some cheerily incomprehensible German sleevenotes expressing his thanks and praise. He would, however, also like to see a lot of these groups spending more time recording live sessions together, rather than feeding samples into a computer and setting it all to a rigid digital pulse. "You must have the power and the courage to play together," he insists. "Mr Click Track is a dictator. He is the killer of music."

Peter Thomas uses this formal mode of address as a means of indicating deference rather respect. It also comes out in his comments concerning the latest media conglomerate "Mr Seagram" (the company that took over Polygram). "Today," he says of the music industry in general, "the composer must have two hands to play and two hands for shooting." His thumbs cock imaginary revolvers to emphasise the point. The whole concept behind remixing and sampling has him twisting and moulding the air in front of him, not out of anxiety, but in order to demonstrate how different the two processes are from composing and arranging. "Mixing is about volume levels and echo," he explains, moving invisible blocks of sound around as he speaks. "An arrangement must come before in the head." When asked to remix a Combustible Edison track recently, the first thing he did was take all the bass off. "You are young, young, young, but you play old, old, old," he admonishes. "If you ask a young boy what the difference is between a violin and a double bass, you know what he says?" Thomas pauses, his expression as bland as a baby's, before giving his answer. "The bass burns longer." □ Warp Back To Earth 66/99 *is out now on Bungalow Records*

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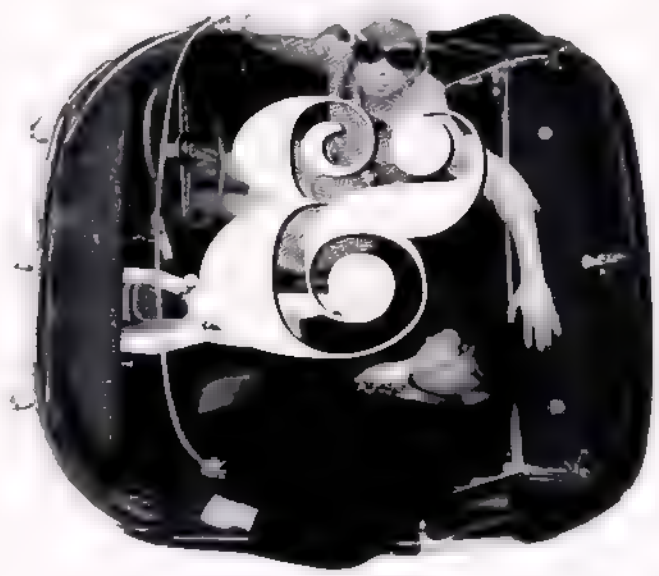

playboy & playgirl

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Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of. . .

Alec Empire

Tested by Peter Shapiro

Born in Berlin in May, 1972, Alec Empire was raised on a steady diet of HipHop and punk rock and formed his first group, Die Kinder, in the late 80s. A typical Acid House conversion experience gripped him while spending a summer in Nice in 1988 and he returned to Berlin, where the Acid scene would soon become the vehicle for expressing the city's post-Wall euphoria. Hooking up with Force Inc in 1992, Empire released the *SuEade* 12", which imagined ecstasy delirium as political fervour; and with "Hetzjagd Auf Nazis", he cast hyperspeed breakbeats as the new punk rock. Reacting against the increasingly whitewashed German Trance movement and the rise of neo-Nazism after reunification, Empire formed Atari Teenage Riot with Syrian vocalist Hanin Elias and MC Carl Crack, from Swaziland. Posing as the ill-begotten lovechildren of Sigue Sigue Sputnik and Technotronic, they scammed a large advance from Phonogram, which they used to set up Digital Hardcore Recordings in 1994. As well as ATR, DHR release Amiga thrash from artists such as Shizuo, EC8OR and Christoph De Babalon. Meanwhile, Empire also found time to release low-key dronescapes like 1995's *Low On Ice* and the speedy, twitchy abstractions of 1996's *Hypermodern Jazz 2000.5* for Mille Plateaux. In addition to his own Riot Beats label, he launched Geist with a 3CD compilation of solo recordings. Most recently, he collaborated with Techno Animal on 1998's *The Curse Of The Golden Vampire*. The Jukebox took place in London.

PHOTO WANDY

UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE

"Afrogermanic" from *Interstellar Fugitives* (Underground Resistance)

It's some electro stuff, right? There's some drum machines and a robot voice. OK, what is it?

It's the new Underground Resistance record.

OK, people told me it was really hard. Is that hard?

Not really. . .

I love these guys. Basically, when I was into it, that was in 91, 92, they did the *Riot* EP, "Acid Rain", very important stuff. I'm not so sure about this electro stuff. It's this revival thing again. But I think it's a good idea that people move away from 4/4 bass drum.

Why was it so important back then?

The old Underground Resistance stuff? It was really inspiring and sounded so noisy. It was just like electronic soul, in my opinion. I know a lot of the Detroit purists don't think these records were any good, but I think the sound was really live and spontaneous. There were all these mid-frequencies that they got rid of years later — these crash cymbals and soul breaks. Also, the artwork on the records was an important message. They seem more militant than they did back then, but I'd really like to hear that in the music.

You think they lost their way a bit?

I don't want to judge them. We met there in 92 [makes a cross with his arms] and then I went in a totally different direction. Underground Resistance, to me, was the only exciting thing about Techno when I look back now. It was really important that they were DJing at the Tresor club in Berlin. The Techno scene never got to this point again.

Was it just that they were political in a scene where everybody else was very apolitical?

At the time I didn't see the rave scene so much as apolitical. I thought Underground Resistance was totally reflecting what we felt in Berlin, and that was great. I think in England it was different. It was more about being happy at that time [laughs].

CAETANO VELOSO

"Ambiente De Festival (É Probido Probir)" from *A Arte De Caetano Veloso* (Verve)

It's kind of cool [laughs]. What is it?

It's a live recording of Brazilian singer Caetano Veloso. The audience is rioting because they can't stand what he's playing.

Sounds good. I like this kind of stuff — people rioting for the wrong reasons [laughs]. People should riot against something they don't like.

It's probably the most visceral recording of an audience riot.

I remember a festival we did in Spain. There were 5-6000 people there. We were playing and the audience was so bad and stupid in a way. After the second song, we just . . . drowned everything in noise. I pulled down my pants, my underpants too, and Hanin [Elias] was screaming, "Spain, fuck the Pope", things like that. This kind of reminds me of that. Out of 5000 people, there were 4000 throwing stuff, they wanted to kill us, throwing fruit and beer and sand. We were, like, covered in mud. Our tour manager left after that, he couldn't stand it any more [laughs]. It was a bit like this, but our music was much louder. We abused that kind of power.

Would you rather have the audience riot or remain indifferent?

A lot of our shows are about confrontation. I think the audience was indifferent at the beginning and that's why we made it happen. We thought it would bring some fun to a shit situation, but people felt really provoked. I didn't imagine that people could be provoked by stuff like this nowadays.

Why is *Otis Redding Live At The Monterey Pop Festival* your favourite record?

The energy is so intense. The tracks are much faster, the audience adds noise to the recording. I heard later that it was a new thing for him to play in front of a pure white audience and that maybe explains why.

MERZBOW

"Yellow Hyper Balls" from *Pulse Demons* (Relapse)

That's strange. When it started, I thought it must be American or maybe German, but I know it has some kind of Japanese influences. It doesn't really sound like Japanese noise, it could be, but somehow the stuff I have from Japan is not like this digital distortion sound. It hasn't got as many frequencies as the Japanese use. It's really aggressive stuff. What is it?

It *is* Japanese. It's Merzbow.

That's him? It's really unusual. Which record is it? I don't have this one [looks at sleeve]. Oh, that one. I have it [laughs]. It is really strange because it sounds more bass heavy here than I expected. I thought for a moment that it was a collaboration with Merz and someone else because the noise changes. I think he creates it out of delay pedals, like these loops. That's his style, but because it was so bass heavy I didn't think it was him.

He's the greatest [laughs]. We've done a lot of shows together. We did a soundclash at CBGB's in New York. I was DJing, really cutting up beats and stuff, things I put on dub plate especially for that, and he was doing noise stuff. We might release that on DHR at some point. It was really intense, over one and a half hours and when it ended everyone was totally hypnotised. I did a similar show with him in Berlin a few months earlier. In the first 30 seconds we blew the PA [laughs]. The audience was kind of pissed off. We then decided to put my turntables through his distortion into his Marshall amps. That was the show where I was cutting myself, dripping blood onto the records. It added this little hitch on the vinyl [laughs]. He asked me after the show why I do that. It was just to add this little noise. You know, sometimes you have to suffer for your art [laughs].

SLAYER

"Angel Of Death" from *Reign In Blood* (Def Jam/Geffen)

[Immediately] Yeah. That's Slayer, right? Yeah. *Yeah* [laughs]. With Slayer I really like the stuff. Of course, I see a sense of humour in it, in the lyrics, but it's intense music. The suburbs of Berlin where I come from, a lot of people listen to that stuff. In a way, it really influenced the DHR sound, like the tempo changes and the beats. When we really got into the [Roland] 909 drum machine around 92, we really wanted to have beats like that, and then a bit later we heard about Gabba. The DHR beats are different to Gabba I think. Yeah, it's interesting music.

What about the conflict between their politics and yours?

A lot of people ask me that, because we did a track together on the *Spawn* soundtrack. They are extreme and we are extreme, so we have the same enemy. No, no it doesn't work like that. I don't take their politics seriously. I know I would be the person normally who *would* take it totally seriously, even if they don't really mean it. But in this case, I think maybe it's because the music reflects something different, in my opinion. Sometimes, most Americans say different stuff than they feel because they are educated like that [laughs]. Maybe this is the case.

It's very cartoonish as well. Have you ever listened to any Black Metal?

Not too much. Sepultura is not really Black Metal. I think the scene in Norway and Sweden, it's interesting that human beings create stuff like this [laughs]. One band I really like is this band called Brain Bomb. They're not really Black Metal, but it's the sickest rock I know of. Every song is about ass fucking and raping, just vicious stuff, but the music is really intense and cool. I think they were influenced a lot by Whitehouse and stuff like that. It's the same with them. Even Hanin Elias is listening to them and normally she would say that they were sexist scum.

DEAD KENNEDYS

"California Über Alles" from *Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables* (Alternative Tentacles)

[Immediately] Yeah, I know this. What is this? I know this from years ago [laughs]. Oh, yeah. Of course. I met Jello Biafra in San Francisco, he was coming to a show of ours. We had a good conversation about stuff. He kept sending me records, including one of the best Moog records I've ever heard, called *Black Mass*, an evil Moog record.

When I was young I wasn't really listening to them. I was just listening to 70s punk. These punks with leather jackets and mohicans had this written on their jackets and I was thinking, 'That's not really cool'. It was next to The Exploited, which is not fair because The Dead Kennedys were much better and they made a real statement. Good message, this song. It still makes sense.

Did you listen to them for the lyrics, or the feel of the music?

It was more the whole thing. I paid attention to the record sleeves and the information and the way they would have these collages. Or the story I heard where they had the American flag with the swastikas and they took a lot of shit for that. That was what really interested me. But "Blank Generation" by Richard Hell had much more energy for me personally.

SLEAZY D

"I've Lost Control" from *Classic Acid* (Mastercuts)

This reminds me of being in school. I was the only one listening to Acid. I was a complete outsider. Everybody was still listening to punk and going, 'That's disco shit. Gay disco shit.' A few years later, I thought maybe they were right about the disco shit [laughs].

How did you first get into this?

I was in the south of France and some people there that I knew took me to this Acid House party. First, I was anti-Acid, I was wearing this T-shirt on which Smiley [the Acid House 'logo'] had been shot. . I was really into Dinosaur Jr and a lot of punk bands. I thought Acid House was S'Express or something [laughs]. But I was proved wrong because the stuff had so much energy and there was a weird atmosphere at this party – like a ritual or something. Everyone was putting their hands up in the air at the same time screaming, 'Acieed'. I was like, 'This is really crazy, but it makes sense.' Punk was kind of dead, I was still listening to it because I didn't have so many alternatives. I started to listen to Schoenberg and people like that, because it was interesting to me that their music was banned during the Third Reich. I was really bored by song structures at this time, so when that came along I was like, 'OK, cool'.

Coming back to Berlin, I discovered that the scene was just starting there. It was a really small scene and when I look back at it now, it was really strange that you would have a party with maybe 80 or 100 people and you would have me there and Dr Motte, DJ Westbam, all these people at this one place [laughs]. If someone had filmed that, it would be the funniest thing because we hate each other so much now. A really inspiring time. It had a lot to do with the changes that were going on in Berlin at the time.

THE COUP

"Dig It" from *Kill My Landlord* (Wild Pitch)

I don't know the song, but I think I know the band. Who is it?

It's a group called The Coup, a black activist group from San Francisco.

Is this new?

It's from 93, I think. How much were you paying attention to HipHop?

A lot. HipHop was the first stuff that I was into. Grandmaster Flash, stuff like that. Then I started to listen to punk, then I came back when HipHop bands like Public Enemy and Jungle Brothers started to use samplers. It became really interesting to me again. Then I started to listen to Techno, and in the past two years, I've started to pay attention to HipHop again. There are great bands like Company Flow, The Arsonists, stuff The Automator did, like Dr Octagon. Fresh stuff happening. People need to say something and that's really important to me. I don't need people to talk to me about nothing for a whole record [laughs]. In most cases, the most interesting music has really important lyrics. With this new stuff, especially the Rawkus label, it was both. People were doing experiments again.

The lyrics are pretty militant, but the music's not very confrontational, don't you think?

If I heard that at a party or something, I wouldn't straight away listen to the lyrics because I wouldn't pay attention to the music. If people are saying something confrontational, it always makes me wonder why the music isn't.

CAMP SOPHISTO

"Obsession" 7" (Pure Freude)

Yeah. Fuck, who is that again? I don't know. [Laughs] No, no, I know. Fuck. The vocals are really good. What is it again?

It's Camp Sophisto.

Looks at sleeve. Oh, OK. Peter Hein [aka Janie Jones, vocalist from German punk legends Mittagspause and Die Fehlfarben]. I played with him in my first punk band. I think this is really important music, coming from Germany. Also, it sounds so modern now in the way the beats work. I think it's going to come back next year or in the next three or four years. It's really cold sounding. I mean, even for my own music. Really cold sounding. No funk. What life's gonna be like [laughs]. It's really good.

Which was more important to you, German punk or the US/English stuff?

When I had my punk band, this kind of stuff had happened three or four years before. The same people were doing the music. I always thought that was something great, something happening here that is different. But my inspiration always came from American punk. My punk band sang in German. The way Peter Hein is doing lyrics and the way he's singing, he has this technique that maybe you can only get if you understand German. It's really like an aggression is captured in there. With technology you can fake stuff, but with vocals they show what people think, what they really feel. So, to me, in the last year, vocals have become more and more important, even in our own music. With so much stuff it seems that people are hiding behind their equipment, following a creative path that the industry made up for them inside the equipment. That's really not cool.

EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN

"Was Ist Ist" from *Ende Neu* (Mute)

Yeah, Berlin's older generation against Berlin's new generation. They hate me and I was never so much into them. They asked me to do this remix and everyone was like, [in a mock Metal hard man voice] 'Yeah, Alec Empire is remixing Neubauten and it's going to be really hard.' I did more of a Mille Plateaux sort of thing and they were totally not into it. They were giving me shit at this party in Berlin, saying, [in mocking voice] 'Nobody can dance to this. Can you tell us how to dance to your remix?' I was like, 'What the fuck? You can dance to everything, you know.'

They have a weird attitude. In a way, I think they became the people they hated: drinking champagne, going to upper class theatre. I don't want to diss their stuff from the 80s because it was really important. A lot of people see Germany as like, 70s — Kraftwerk, 80s — Neubauten, 90s — Atari Teenage Riot. I'm not so sure about that.

What do you think about the idea of this song being a form to complete, where you fill in the blanks with the cause of your choice?

I don't know. Their stuff is not really vital to me. I know what they mean, but it doesn't really make me euphoric. It's more like this older generation trying to do this subversive stuff, but no one really cares. To me, the lyrics are too much like art, you know? Also, I would not really sing in German anymore.

Why's that?

Because I think German culture always leads to fascism [laughs]. So I try to avoid the culture as much as possible. Also, with ATR we wanted to communicate with people in other countries. OK, choosing English is strange too.

KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN

Studie I from *Elektronische Musik 1952-60* (Stockhausen Verlag)

It sounds like it was created out of one sample with different pitches. I would buy it if I heard it in a shop [laughs]. What is it?

It's Stockhausen.

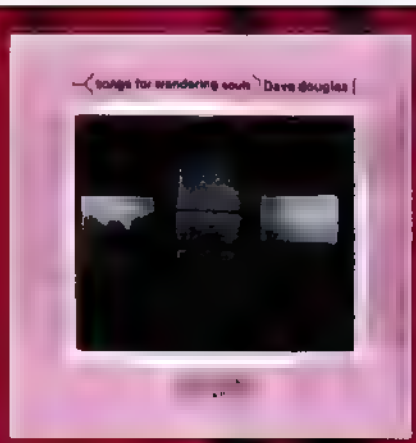
Ah, OK. Good. So it's not a sample. He's a genius.

Were you listening to him when you were listening to Schoenberg and stuff like that?

Not too much. It was later when I got into that. I was listening more to musique concrète stuff. But, what can I say? Really important stuff. My comment was in a way explaining it because I think a lot of people nowadays don't understand how complex and how well thought out and composed his work is. A lot of people are saying, 'Oh yeah, we're influenced by Stockhausen'. I would never compare our stuff with him because to recreate stuff like this, that's so difficult.

Do you respond to the sounds themselves or is it the idea of the process?

It's everything. This kind of music is questioning this whole European composing technique. It's really necessary. I think it's a shame that all these dentists and bourgeois people are still listening to classical music that is 300 years old. Even now, with stuff like this and Schoenberg, which is like 100 years old, people go, 'Oh my god, this is so noisy. I can't stand it'. It just shows how old this society is, just how fucked up and conservative and stuck it is. Music like this totally smashes that into pieces. □ *Atari Teenage Riot's* 60 Second Wipe Out *album and* Revolution Action *EP are out now on DHR*



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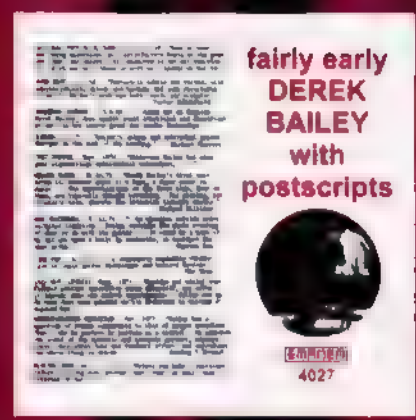

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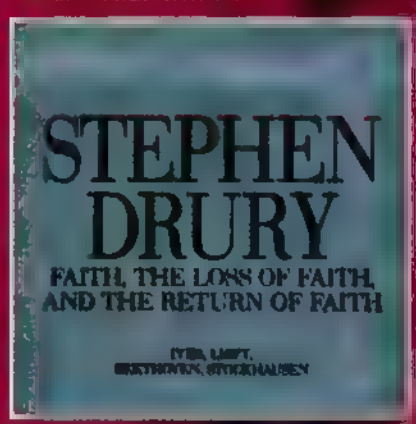

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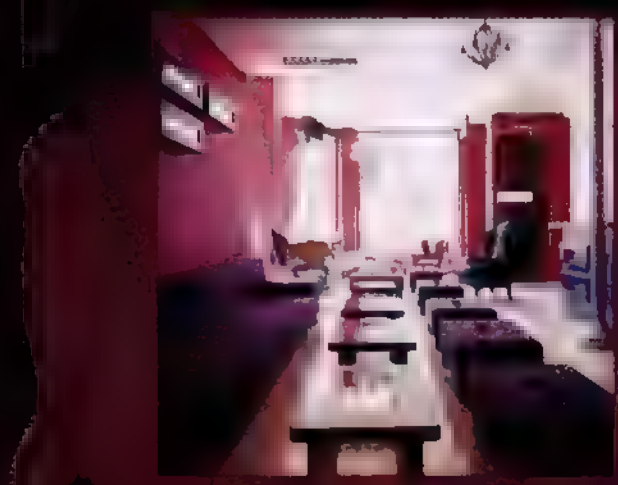

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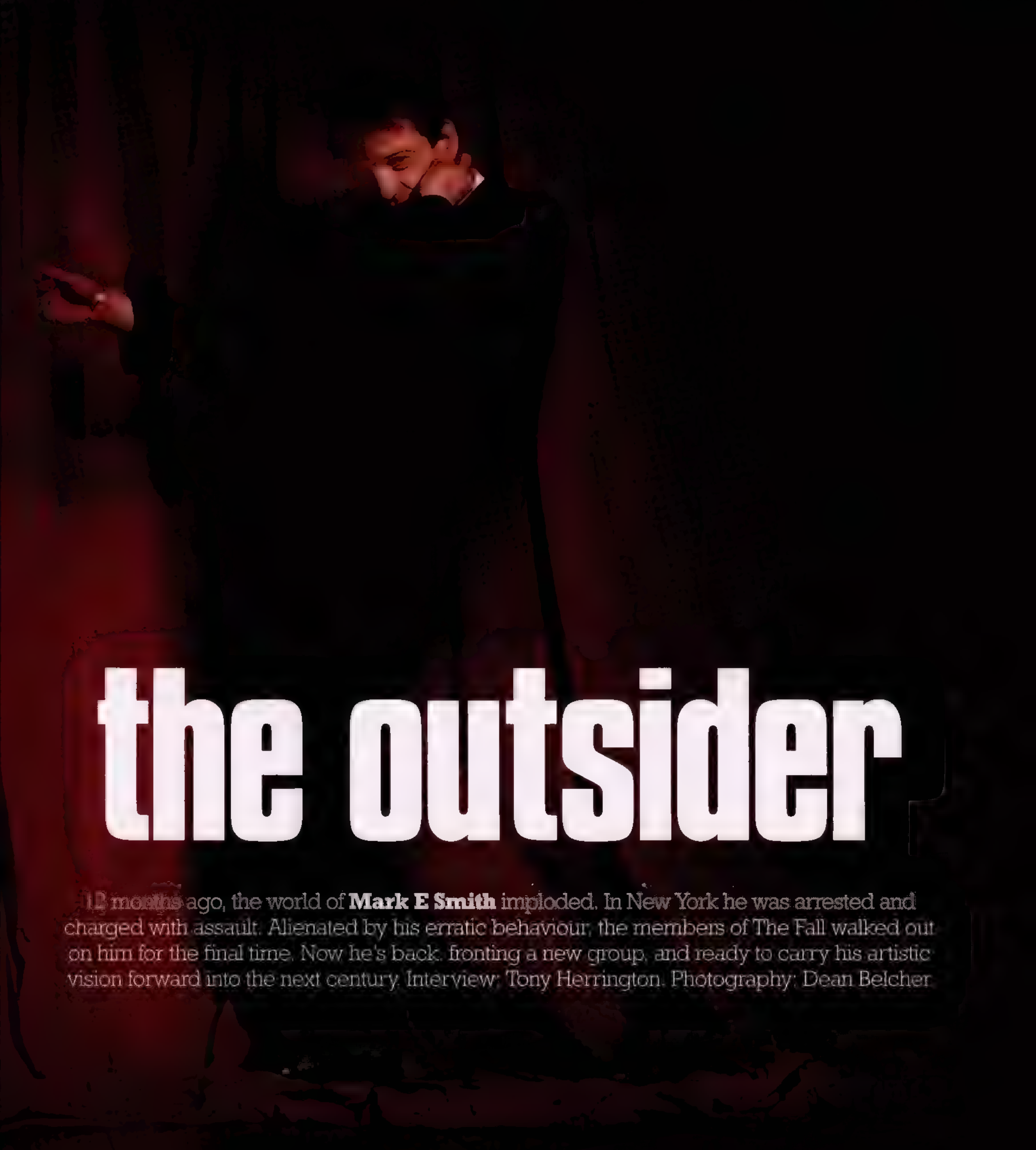


the outsider

12 months ago, the world of **Mark E Smith** imploded. In New York he was arrested and charged with assault. Alienated by his erratic behaviour, the members of The Fall walked out on him for the final time. Now he's back, fronting a new group, and ready to carry his artistic vision forward into the next century. Interview: Tony Herrington. Photography: Dean Belcher

The interview begins with a red herring. A lead picked up that morning, but which turns out to be another scrap of misinformation to lay on top of all the other items of hearsay and rumour that have attached themselves, like an outer, disfiguring skin, to the body of Mark E Smith and his group The Fall over the last 20 years.

I'm told that you have just been away, I begin, to Africa. Even as I put the question to Mark it sounds utterly ridiculous: the kind of thing you might reasonably expect to ask one day of a subject such as Bill Laswell, Ryuichi Sakamoto, or any other member of music's intercontinental perpetual motion club. But not Mark E Smith, a musician who makes a virtue out of the fact that he still lives within walking distance of the place of his birth in Salford, North Manchester. (As he tells me later: "I'm near my mother now. There are no more men in the family, they all died. The family are all women, so it's handy to have somebody around, I think. And I can cadge money off them and everything," he adds, laughing uproariously.)

Sure enough, the answer comes back in the negative. "No, not really." Where then? "Lanzarote, Tenerife. I just went up there for a bit, four or five days."

The Canary Islands, then, located just off the coast of Morocco, but Spain rather than Africa. I was just there myself in fact, last October.

"Was you? It's good isn't it? It's strange."

Very. Some of it is like being on the surface of the moon.

"Iceland is a bit like that. Lanzarote was like Iceland with sun."

The Canaries are sometimes called the Islands of Lost Souls. People travel there to escape, but often they are criminals on the run, or people who are trying to erase some traumatic past incident in their lives. In the Canary Islands there is a high suicide rate among ex-pats.

"Is there? I didn't know that. Just having a holiday was great, I haven't had a holiday for about two years. So that was unusual. It took me about three or four days for my body to suss out that I wasn't about to go on stage. When I've been in places like that, Greece or Spain, Madrid, or Portugal, it's always been to play, so it really did me a lot of good actually. For the first three days I was like this [he hunches his shoulders into a stressed-out position], because when you're in places like that you are doubly keyed up with the group, because they're going, 'Oh, isn't it lovely', and they forget that they're there to play, or they play crap. At 7 o'clock I'm like, 'Hurry up! Finish your dinner'. No Mark, it's all right. You can do what you like tonight."

I remember something you once wrote about the track "Iceland" on *Hex Enduction Hour* (released in 1982), which implied that you had finally found your roots in Reykjavik. When was the last time you were in Iceland?

"Two years ago. I've been on holiday there, worked there three or four times. That's a good holiday to go on. It's the same scene. Like Lanzarote, there's no bugger there. The beach part was rammed to the gills with Brits and Krauts, but five minutes out of there it was great, there was no bugger around.

"The thing I liked about it was, it was the first time I'd got on an aeroplane where everyone wasn't a businessman or stuck-up professional traveller. That was relaxing, to get on a plane and everybody is working class. Usually with me, when they hear your voice, it's like, 'What's he doing on this plane?', everybody watches when you go to the bog. And if you're with the group it's worse. I didn't get that this time. It was full of these people who never go away, never travel anywhere, maybe just once a year. They're asking *you* what to do: is this where we get off the plane?" Mark laughs. "It was nice that, you know."

Was the flight to Lanzarote part of Mark Smith's own process of erasure, an attempt to obliterate the traumatic events, still shrouded in mystery, that marked The Fall's 1998 American tour? The stories emerging at that time were terrible, and salaciously reported. Perplexing bulletins of internecine fighting both on and off stage; lacklustre or disastrous performances; Smith on a 24-7 drunk-binge, seemingly locked on a course of auto-destruction, a suicide mission to sabotage his group's music and future.

It all came to a head at the beginning of last year in New York City, when all but one member of The Fall walked out on the group for good, and Smith was arrested and bailed on charges of bodily assault.

I'm sorry about this, I say, but I have to ask. How do you feel now about what happened in New York?

"I was just starting to forget about it," he says, the reply dripping with sarcasm. "They wrote a lot of shit about New York," he continues, referring to a certain weekly UK music paper. "I rang the editor up about it. They get their information off the Internet. I said, 'What kind of editor are you? Get a retraction printed'. And it was like that big. It's dangerous that stuff, especially if you're still on bail. You're talking about jeopardising somebody's liberty here.

"But a lot of the time I play along with it. I mean, how many interviews have I done? They think you're that daft, but sometimes it's good to have that image of being drunk and arrogant.

"And people think it's engineered. People get very jealous. Bands, who are dead rich, I've got nothing, me, they think: how much did you pay to get that much press? People in America said to me that to get the amount of publicity I got you'd have to pay a press guy $500,000. That's what they do, you know, these actors and actresses. 'My struggle with alcohol' and all that. They haven't got a cocaine problem, you must have sussed this out, they've paid the PR guy just to revive their careers. That's the rate, $250,000, if you want blanket coverage."

Do you get frustrated by the fact that your constituency is defined by the music press, and that your contemporaries are perceived to be people like ... Echo And The Bunnymen or some such. Don't you think that's ridiculous? Mark bursts out laughing.

"Very much. I did before I was in a band. You worked that out. I'm still very edgy about it, what I do, talking about it. That's my background. To my mam's mates, for instance, I'm that pop singer fella. That's good in a way, it brings you down a peg. I do find it ... That's not what I only do. But they are my contemporaries, yes. Ian [McCulloch] out of Echo used to be our roadie ... But I don't relate to him anymore. Because I don't like musicians much. I don't hate them, but I don't associate with them. Most of my mates know nothing about music. They just know I'm in a group. And I'm not what they expect of a singer. It sounds ridiculous, but if I do get a compliment it's: you're not like what we thought you'd be like. We thought you'd be a right pain in the arse."

> **"If I do get a compliment it's: you're not like what we thought you'd be like. We thought you'd be a right pain in the arse"**

At the beginning of this year Mark debuted a new version of The Fall, which retained just keyboard player Julia Nagle from the group that had come apart in New York. Performing in unlikely venues in Ashton and Whitefield, suburban areas of North Manchester, the group premiered many of the songs which now make up the new Fall album, *The Marshall Suite*. Among the record's 13 tracks is a thundering, motorik version of The Saints' misanthropic 1977 single "This Perfect Day" to set alongside extraordinary performances such as "Shake Off" and "Antidote". The record is split into three sections, obliquely linked by episodes in the life of a character called the Crying Marshall.

"This new band is great," Mark says enthusiastically. "Tom [Head], the drummer, I'm lucky to get him, he's brilliant. His older brother is a good mate of mine. He played me this tape he'd done and it was like Zappa-esque stuff. I said, 'Yeah, do you think he'd do it?' He's great because he does exactly what you want. He'd played jazz, Country & Western, he can play anything, I mean, really play it. It used to take days, weeks and months sometimes, before the drummer got it right. He can get what you want like that [he clicks his fingers]. Touch wood. It's a pleasure to be on stage now, which is the first time it's been like that for a bit.

"It's quite weird actually," he continues, then pauses. "A lot of the things that were frustrating me have disappeared. A lot of things that were put down to me rambling and all that was in fact the group, that last group. They were efficient, lazy, old fashioned, I thought, everything The Fall shouldn't be."

Is that something that bothers you: you get all the credit for The Fall, but all the blame as well?

"For sure, 'course you do. I take it anyway. You've got to take it. You can't say to interviewers, 'Well actually, I thought the set was rubbish last night'. If people say that set was a bit long, or a bit flat, you have to say, 'It was my idea'. You take the rough... But they've got their own band now," he says, referring to Ask, the group formed by the members of The Fall who jumped ship in New York, "and everyone says... *It wasn't you* [laughs]."

"Now," Mark says, "I relate a lot to, not to DJs playing music, but a lot of these dance groups, and I think they are very much ignored, much more than we were. You never hear about them, they never get reviewed, but there are some really interesting bands in Manchester, about 17, 18 years old. They've got a guy on the records, they've got a machine, something like a sampler, but they've also got a bass player and the singer looks like someone who works in a supermarket. They've got tapes going, keyboards, a lot of distortion, a lot of feedback. If they've got drums, they'll play just one drum, or a hi-hat. And the lyrics are just hitting you, stuff you can't understand."

That will do nicely as a description of the music that Mark has been issuing over the last two years, beginning with the "Plug Myself In" single, a collaboration with the Manchester production team DOSE, who had connections with Pete Waterman's PWL operation, and the release of the 1997 Fall LP *Levitate* (the follow-up to the 1996 *Light User Syndrome* album), which again featured input from DOSE, and was partly recorded at the PWL studios in Manchester.

"I looked on *Levitate* as a new start," says Mark. "That was part of the disagreement; I think the group understood what was going on. They were even talking about going on strike if we used a DAT player. [He sounds exasperated] You're The Fall, for Christ's sake. It's amazing how many times I've had to put up with that kind of crap. You think you're past all that, fellas with beer bellies turning everything you do into a bloody Sex Pistols track. I thought that stopped happening ages back."

"You think you're past all that, fellas with beer bellies turning everything you do into a bloody Sex Pistols track."

There weren't many words on *Levitate*. The texts sounded like cut-ups, like they'd been blasted into incoherent fragments. Was that deliberate?

"Yeah, very, and that was what started the rows with the group as well. I was doing that on stage, walking off. I was doing it deliberately. People would say he was too drunk to sing so he disappears for 15 minutes, but I wasn't. What I was trying to do... When you've got nothing to say, don't say it, I reckon, and it was really working well. The audiences were getting younger and younger, and they were really getting into it, because if you talk to young people, that's what they listen to, they don't like a lot of lyrics. The lads who work at PWL, they don't care about lyrics, they're just another layer in the track. But the group would be saying, 'You never do your job'."

Applying the Protestant work ethic.

"No, they want to be rock stars, but those days are gone in my mind, a long time ago [laughs]. And they started doing stupid things on stage. I haven't been in that situation since before I was in The Fall. You can't sing to that way of playing. I had to bring back the old Fall things, fine people for doing drum rolls [laughs]. Fined for too many solos. 'What did you think of those two solos I put in?' 'Did you like them?' 'Yeah.' 'Well, it's coming out of your wages.'"

What kind of response did that get?

"Not much," he says, still laughing so hard that he almost spills his drink.

An insight into the kind of volatile relationships that exist between Smith and the musicians he works with can be heard on "Inch", a track that begins with a tape of a heated phone conversation between Smith and DOSE's Simon Spencer. "Inch" has only just been released as a single, but the relationship with DOSE was actually terminated during the sessions for *Levitate*.

"I had to fire them," says Mark. "Working with them was great, but the mistake I made there was asking them to work on *Levitate*. They went dead rocky. I felt like a real corrupter. They obviously read a book on how to be a rock producer, or how to behave. I said, 'If I wanted a bad rock producer, I'd have got one. I want you to do what you did when I worked with you [on "Plug Myself In"]'. Jason [Barron] still works with us. He was working at PWL at the time. He did a lot on *Levitate*, engineering and helping me with sounds. A lot of those funny noises, I couldn't have done that with a rock producer.

"All those lads who work at PWL, people sneer at them, they work on Steps and all that, but their own stuff is dead weird. Guitar groups sneer at Pete Waterman's, but they're pushing a few more barriers than a lot of people. They leave school at 16 and go straight into the studio. You go into other studios, the engineer's smoking pot, he's got his own band, his own ideas. With these lads, you can say, 'I want it to sound like this', and you can make the noise with your mouth. You go out for a drink, come back, and they say, 'We did it, Mark, the minute you went out the door'. [Laughs] You're so used to coming back an hour later and having to say, 'No, it's not like that, now do it like this'.

"Triple echo. 60s sounds. I said to them, 'I want a backward noise, a bit like on *Sgt Pepper* but not quite'. They all went, 'What? A *Sgt Pepper* sound? What's that?' One of the older ones said, 'Oh, it's an LP or something'. I said, 'I fucking love you lads!'

"He's been really good to me, Pete Waterman. At PWL they just have PWL artists working there, but he did it as a favour to me. He's the best record company boss, for me. When I was working with DOSE, they'd be going, 'Do this, do that', there were all these managers, interfering buggers, from their label. Pete Waterman comes in and says, 'Let Mark do what he wants, all right? He knows what he's doing'. 'Yes, Pete!' Stopping record labels interfering is half the job. What you hear on the record is like five per cent of the work."

Last year, The Fall's current record company, Artful, released a Mark E Smith solo project, *The Post Nearly Man*, sections of which were recorded at PWL. Marketed as a spoken word record, the CD was best understood if listened to as an audio scrapbook, or in the tradition of the kind of marginalised, small hours radio art documented in Douglas Khan and Gregory Whitehead's *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio & The Avant Garde*; or even the absurdist, theatrical compositions of Mauricio Kagel, which have been described by writer Paul Griffiths as providing the platform for a new "music of poverty and error".

The first track on *The Post Nearly Man*, "The Horror In Clay", opens with a quote from HP Lovecraft's 1926 tale, "The Call Of Cthulhu". The connection forms a link with some of Mark's earliest works. Lovecraft, who fused (in the words of Joyce Carol Oates) "the brooding idiosyncrasies and metonymic strategies of the 19th century Gothic imagination", proto-science fiction scenarios and his own nightmarish dreamscapes into hair-raising tales of existential terror and insight, has long been a marker for Smith's own intrepid imagination. For The Fall's genuinely spooky 1979 song "Spectre Vs Rector", just reissued by Cog Sinister/Voiceprint as part of the *Dragnet* album, Smith invoked the terrible character of Yog-Sothoth from "The Dunwich Horror", and many of his texts ("The Impression Of J Temperance", "Jaw Bone And The Air-Rifle", "Garden", as well as more recent songs such as "Hurricane Edward" and "The Horror In Clay") appear to draw on both Lovecraft's themes and techniques.

So I ask: when did you first read Lovecraft?

"When I was... a child really. It's funny going back to it and reading it now, which I did, with doing that record. It's very strange. It reminds you of how you were as well, what you thought... " Mark tails off, then continues: "I'm one of those people who rages about the way Lovecraft is treated in the cinema."

Hollywood does have a tendency to ruin everything it touches.

"Yeah, everything. There are not many films that are better than the books, or as good as."

There is a lot of diverse material on *The Post Nearly Man*. Where did it come from?

"A couple of years ago I got this commission to write six episodes of what was going to be like an *X-Files* thing. I said I'll do six 25 minute stories. So I spent all this time doing it, and the music, and got all these people to help me with the scripts, got them all ready, went to the TV station, and they said, 'Oh we've changed our minds', the new directors. It was like four or five months hard work up the spout. Then the last thing I heard was *The X-Files* had been in contact with the TV station and they said to

me could we have a look at your scripts again because we can't find the ones you submitted I said, 'No fucking way You'll send them to *The X-Files*, rip all my ideas off, and then send them back and say you're not interested' So I burned half of them," he says, laughing, "and I used the ones that were left for bits of *Nearly Man*."

The record features a disorientating range of characters and scenarios, which are made more oblique by the strange cuts and edits.

"I started getting deliberately obscure That was the fun bit of it. I had people reading out parts of the script in the wrong tense [laughs] The third person They'd say, 'This can't be right, can it?' and I'd say, 'No, leave it, it's great'

"I would have liked it to be about an hour and a half long, more speakers, and using these stereos you can get now where the bass is behind you and the drums are in front of you, this glorified furniture. I thought it would be good to have the voices like that, so that there's someone talking behind you

"It was very frustrating in a lot of ways. It always happens to me, when I get the time and opportunity to do these things all these other things happen in your life I don't know what it is with me, I've done something wrong in a past life or something Something else will come up and it's on your mind, like that thing in New York, or I'll split up with the missus. Always.

"Another problem was, when it came time to cut it, edit it together, the guy at the cutting studio couldn't handle it, a lot of people couldn't handle it, and it became like cursed At the record plant the lacquer went missing They did a cut of it and it came out all hiss. There was a demo of it and it was sent to record shops and it came out backwards You're doing it on your own and you think it's going to be totally controllable, but it wasn't, it was worse."

Because there were all these other people dealing with it down the line?

"No not really, it was just weird It was like cursed, this bloody thing."

The night before I am due to interview Mark, I read a short story entitled "The Misanthrope", written in the years leading up to the First World War by the English novelist JD Beresford The story is related by an anonymous narrator, who travels to an isolated rocky island in order to visit the Misanthrope, who has exiled himself there from all humanity due to a terrible psychic affliction "When I look at people in the face," he explains to his horrified visitor, "I see them as anybody else sees them But when I look back at them over my shoulder I see Oh! I see all their vices and defects. Their faces remain, in a sense the same, but distorted . beastly. . I was living in a world of beasts."

Compared to many of the writers discussed by HP Lovecraft in his 1927 essay "Supernatural Horror In Literature", among them MR James, Arthur Machin and Algernon Blackwood, all of whom have been cited as influential by Mark Smith, Beresford is a forgotten figure in the history of turn-of-the-century fantastical literature But he also wrote a biography of HG Wells, one of the pioneers of the idea of psychic time travel, and another of his novels, written in 1911, was entitled *The Hampdenshire Wonder*, the tale of a child born with such an advanced hyper-intelligence that it is eventually ostracised from the working class community of its birth

The reason for citing Beresford here may or may not become clear presently, but after reading "The Misanthrope", I skim-read Philip K Dick's 1974 novel *Flow My Tears The Policeman Said*, trying to nail down the evidence that will lend weight to a question which I want to ask Mark the following day

In the past, I begin, you've mentioned that you like composers such as Schoenberg and Stockhausen I was wondering whether you picked up on that stuff from reading Philip K Dick, who was a big fan of that kind of music, and would drop subliminal references to it into his books. Were you aware of that connection?

"That's interesting. No, I never knew that, but it explains a lot, because his stuff was so layered at times, like 15 things going on at once in some books I've seen biographies of Dick and I've had to put them away because it's horrible It breaks your heart, the shit he had to put up with bumming meals off students, things like that, just to live, and that was just before he died I go on about not getting any royalties but he got nothing. They pissed around with *Blade Runner* for about five years before it came out, kept changing the script, and he's broke, health's gone, just wondering where he's going to get something to eat, and he dies like a fortnight before *Blade Runner* comes out. So I'm not that bad off."

LIVE PHOTOS CURTIS HARVEY

Mark E Smith, New York, 1998

Dick, like a lot of the writers you've said you admire, was interested in the notion of psychic time travel, attempting to decipher the present by intercutting it with past and future events, which has been a theme in a lot of your work.

"Pre-cog he used to call it. That's happened to me so many times. I've had a dream, or think I've seen something in the paper about an event, and six months later I'll see it. It's weird. You won't believe this, but I remember the last time we toured Yugoslavia, I said to the band, 'Something's going to happen here.' They said, 'Why? It's lovely.' But I could feel it. I could *feel* it. I could bloody... I could virtually *see* it, in the audience, above the audience. I'd come off stage, and say, 'It's fucking weird that audience.' I'd never been frightened by an audience, you know? The group go, 'No, it's great, the birds are lovely' and all that. And it was, they're better dressed than us. But every time I went out I got in trouble with the police or a soldier every fucking time. I got stopped, I got chased by soldiers once. I thought, there's something going on here, I don't like it, you know what I mean?" Then he says, "I'd be talking to somebody and think they were crying. They weren't."

Mark laughs. "It's weird, isn't it? I don't like that too much. I don't have that so much now. It used to shit me up when I was a teenager. [He shivers a little] Some things are better you don't know; don't want to know. Don't want to forecast or hear about."

Maybe those kind of things only feel strange because they've been suppressed or they are not discussed, or because they have been 'degraded' because they are the stuff of science fiction and fantasy, weird fiction, as Lovecraft called it. Maybe they are really not that strange.

"That's right. Maybe people should be a bit more aware of it. It's like these politicians, don't they read history books? I mean, the bloody Balkans is basic history O Level. I knew when I was 15 that they were bloody trouble, man. They decimated the English working class, the bloody Serbians, starting that mess off, getting mad about nought again. You go to Scotland, half the bloody male population died, you know what I mean? Three quarters of the villages you go through, gone, you know, because of a bloody Serb, and taking notice of them and getting involved. I think Bismarck had the best quote. He said the whole of the Balkans is not worth the life of one single Pomeranian Grenadier [laughs]. They said he was cynical, a horrible man, Bismarck. I thought he was bloody great.

"I haven't played abroad for quite a while now, so I've had things coming back. When you think back, it's quite weird. We were in Yugoslavia about the time of... "White Lightning". I don't remember when that was. Some years are a blur."

> **"I knew when I was 15 that the Balkans were bloody trouble. They decimated the English working class, the bloody Serbians"**

"The visionary is inevitably an Outsider" — Colin Wilson

Is it absurd to refer to Mark Smith as a visionary? Perhaps, and almost certainly if you subscribe to the kind of ingrained hierarchical value system imposed on our world by the likes of Roger Scruton, who might regard the likes of Smith as a mere insect, scurrying around the feet of the Great Men of art, science and literature. But many of the themes that have populated Smith's writing over the last two decades might reasonably fit the visionary-Outsider identity in 19th century European literature as defined by Colin Wilson in his mid-50s tract *The Outsider*. Like both Lovecraft's and Wilson's anti-canons of Outsider authors, like Louis-Ferdinand Celine and his notorious disciple Charles Bukowski, all writers whose supernatural X-ray vision caused them to ascend/descend into misanthropic loathing and linguistic overload, Smith still conjures idiosyncratic narratives as a means of decoding and reflecting back the absurdities of his times.

The Crying Marshall is just the latest in a line of invented personae that stretches back to the late 70s and the creation of Roman Totale ("*the bastard offspring of Charles I and the Great God Pan*") and through which Smith projects himself and his unbidden visions.

The 'I' in your songs is very rarely you, I say.

"Right, well done, someone's got it. I find it very stimulating, writing for characters. It's a good way to filter ideas. It gives you a new slant. I feel a lot freer headwise now, so that I have time for such thoughts, odd things. Explaining it to everybody else is a pain in the arse. But why should you have to explain it?"

It's been put about that sections of *The Marshall Suite* are based on Hardy's *The Mayor Of Casterbridge*. Mark laughs dismissively.

"That got out because I was trying to explain the concept to the so-called producer, a loony, who'd get everything wrong anyway. They think Mayor/Marshall. I said, 'Have you read *The Mayor Of Casterbridge*?' No. I said, 'It just goes down and down that book, which is the way you produced the record, you bastard [laughs].'

So who, or what, is the Crying Marshall?

"He's just... a figure, to link it together. The idea started when I did the track "The Crying Marshall" with these two blokes called The Filthy Three, one of them is Jason [Barron]. They had a song and they didn't have any lyrics for it. That song came from that, throwing ideas around. I thought it would be good to do it as the story of his life, a themed LP, with a thread running through it. It's such an unhip thing to do, but I do want to continue and develop it. Maybe a five sided thing next: the return of the Marshall."

The link with the version of "This Perfect Day" is elusive. "There isn't one." So why do you do cover versions?

"It gives you a different perspective, which is good for me, and you can be a lot freer in a strange way. "F-'oldin' Money" [also on the new record], that's half a cover; it's based on a piece of rockabilly from around 1955. I can't even find the publisher or whether the bloke's alive or anything. I don't like to just lift things, I've always been against that.

"I'm still very mad that some of the mixes on the new record were pissed about with by the producer while I was away," Mark announces suddenly. "It's only one or two tracks, no one else will notice it, but I'm furious. I won't talk to him. And they missed a track off! "The Crying Marshall"! [He laughs hysterically] The remix is on it, but the original song isn't, so there should be like another two and half minutes. Not to worry. You get to a point where it's not worth putting everything back again." Then he adds, through gritted teeth: "It's good I can laugh about it, innit!

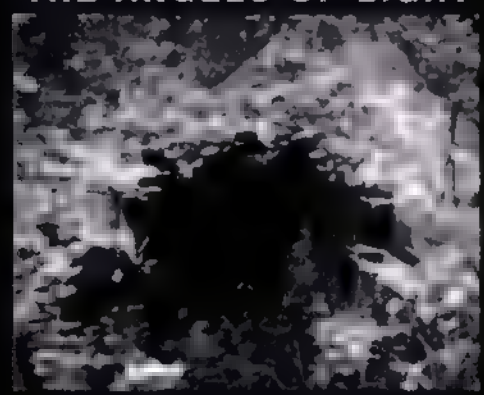
"I used to try and cover everything," he continues, "still do, but if you have your eyes everywhere and your brain everywhere it just fucks you up, take my word for it." □

The Marshall Suite *is out now on Artful. The Fall tour the UK this month: see Out There. Special thanks to Rich Kidd and the contributors to the FallNet for seeding various lines of enquiry. Go to:* fall.cjb.net

THE ANGELS OF LIGHT:

AN AMAZING NEW PROJECT FROM EX-SWANS VISIONARY MICHAEL GIRA

THE ANGELS OF LIGHT



NEW MOTHER

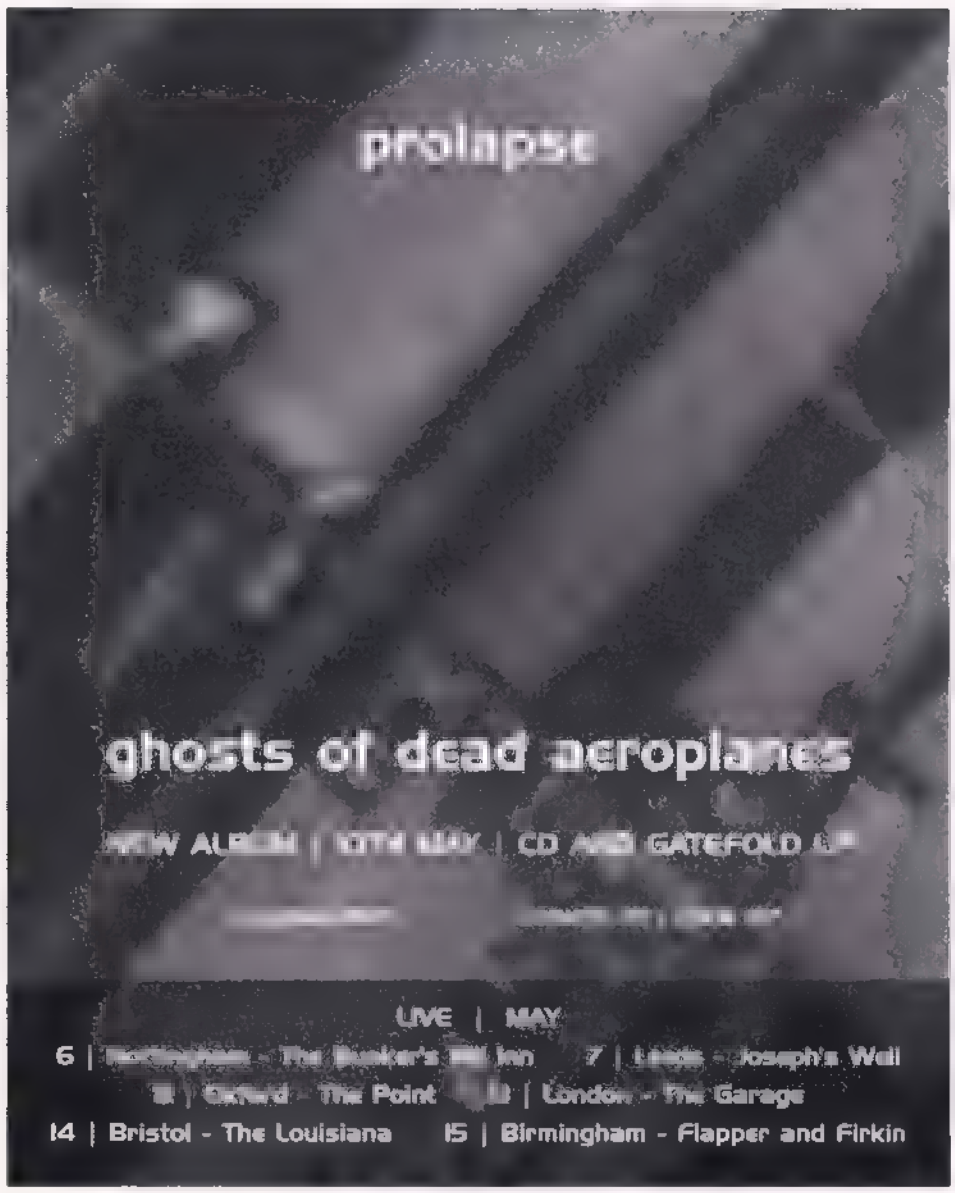
The Angels of Light is the first "songwriting" project from ex-Swans founder Michael Gira since he discontinued that band 1 1/2 years ago. For those familiar with Gira's role in the Swans and his more recent sonic experimentations in the Body Lovers/Haters, this material will represent a radical step into new territory. For those unfamiliar with Gira's influential 18 years of musical output, it shouldn't make any difference.

Release CD: 6th April 1999

UK DISTRIBUTION: SRD

Look out for The Angels Of Light European tour in May 1999

YGR Europe / Fringecore, P.O. Box 165, 2600 Berchem 1, Belgium, info@fringecore.com



THE FALL

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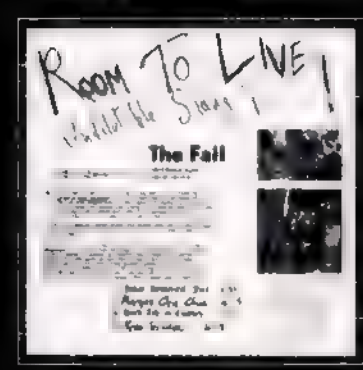

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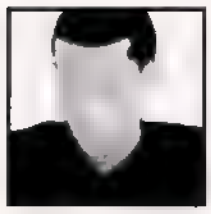
facing up to

"In the future we will all be **A Certain Frank**!" warns Frank electronica pioneers Der Plan. Their witty fusion of House



More than just a certain Frank Fenstermacher, the Dusseldorf group A Certain Frank also consists of Kurt Dahlke, aka Pyrolator. Together, they have been making music for 20 years, firstly as two thirds of the ur-electronica trio Der Plan, while running Germany's most consistently interesting independent label Ata Tak — they released Oval's debut album *Wohnton*, for instance — before they scored an alternative airwave hit in late 1998 with "nobody ? no !"

The title track of their second album, "nobody ? no !" is a languidly sung ballad structured round a distorting, truncated jazz riff, rollered along on Latinate percussion loops and punctuated with some peaky brass. The tropic mood is continued through a playful yet expertly arranged album of spacious palm court music consisting of moonlight piano, rippling Hollywood harps, balmy saxes and detumescent voices. The album happily owns up to a lifelong debt to Martin Denny, Les Baxter and other such gurus of bachelor pad exotica. If one plus one always equalled two, ordinarily I'd hate it with a venom I'd normally reserve for Stereolab. But we're talking music not maths, and there's something in A Certain Frank's musicianly use of such hackneyed elements that is wittily worldweary rather than shopworn, and beneath its veneer of cosmopolitan sophistication, there's a more subversive internationalist agent at work that dates back to their discovery of 50s American suburbia's music of choice.

"We have known the exotic music of Martin Denny since we first met Boyd Rice, of Non, when he and Der Plan did a tour together in 1981," recalls Frank Fenstermacher via e-mail. "Since then I have taken more interest in the music of my parents' generation, which I used to hate. But the Schlager [German pop hits] of my parents cannot be compared to the multicultural music of the 50s and 60s in the USA."

Exotica has long been an important component of the music Fenstermacher and Pyrolator have been making together and apart these past 20 years, even as it was anathema to their earliest musical incarnations. In the late 70s, the wealthy city of Dusseldorf, office block to the nearby industrial Ruhr district, was home to Germany's earliest and fastest developing punk scene. If on the surface its glitzy shopping streets, chi-chi clubs and cafes, and trashy downtown discos made Dusseldorf an unlikely place for punk to take root, it was also home to Motorik marvels like Kraftwerk, Neu! and La Dusseldorf, all of whom survived punk's Maoist purges more or less intact, and an international art and avantish gallery scene, which simultaneously fed and fed off such cultural developments. Before they came together with third member Moritz R in Der Plan, Pyrolator was briefly a member of Deutsch-Amerikanische-Freundschaft — he not only appeared on their first, now rare instrumental album *Ein Produkt Der* , he also released it on his own Warning label (which later mutated into Der Plan's Ata Tak home) — and Frank Fenstermacher played sax in various punk units, out of which emerged the key German punk-in-transition group Die Fehlfarben. Frank played on their first album and also their punk hit, the sarky samba, "Ein Jahr (Es Geht Voran)"

Heavily linked to Dusseldorf's art scene, Der Plan began distancing themselves from punk with their virtually all electronic set-up and their early bizarre pop. Out of an early fixation with The Residents and Moritz R's life-altering trip to Disneyland, the trio evolved the excellent, gut-churning, if conceptually obscure set of synth songs on their debut album *Gen Reig* (1980). At about the same time they received an emergency call from a London friend and fan, Mute founder Daniel Miller, asking them to put up Boyd Rice, aka Non, in Düsseldorf, while the work permits for his British concert dates were being sorted out.

Ironically, it was this meeting with the blackest of Industrial noisemakers that triggered Der Plan's career-long enthusiasm for exotica, which continues to be felt through the work of A Certain Frank. From Der Plan through to the present, Frank and Pyrolator have

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM *TISCHGESELLSCHAFT* BY KATHARINA FRITSCH

the future

Fenstermacher, from the group that rose out of the ashes of and exotica belies their dystopian message. Words: Biba Kopf

incorporated such elements in their ever inventive responses to the heavy German question must all German — ie Teutonic — art by definition be monolithically heavy?

"This is a very difficult question, because with Der Plan we were always making a bid for the cultural independence of German music, which didn't really exist at the time," ponders Frank "But in the present times of a growing, stupid nationalism it is strange to argue for your own culture when it doesn't feel like your own culture anymore So I think it's better to give it up and to immerse yourself in other, global cultures, which we hope people do not see as an imperialistic exploitation of these other cultures

"Besides, my musical home seems to be Central Africa and its pygmy music So I say about myself I'm a growth- and pigment-challenged pygmy [Frank is more than six feet tall] The knowledge of different cultures, even if it is only through pictures, and the longing they induce have always played their role in our European art and music, and we are in the luxurious situation of being able to revitalise our poor town architecture and living spaces with the spiritual/cultural richness of other cultures "

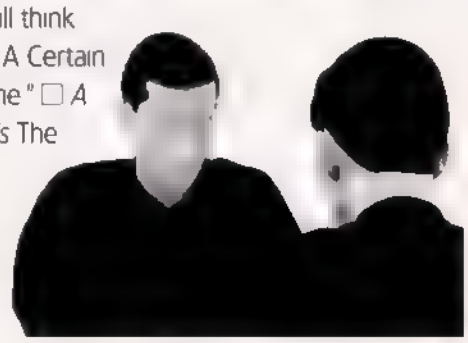
Der Plan answered the German question with a stream of witty, inventive and very German electronic songs, whose subversive lightness should have earned them a much larger following than their international cult base

"With Der Plan, we always did a kind of 'anti-pop pop', and we were wondering why so few people liked us," says Frank, in a tone of mock despair "Maybe with A Certain Frank we were a little bit afraid that our music becomes too consumable, and we have to make clear where we stand and what we think On the other hand, I have the feeling that the music more and more becomes the message, and that there is no other message than the musical taste and the feelings that we exchange with our audience

"When I was 20, I was a big fan of jazz and free jazz," he continues "In 1984 I was in South America and started to love Latin music So I had the feeling, in the middle of the 90s, that a lot of groovy exotic, Latin and jazz music was re-explored and that I'm not the only one anymore who likes this kind of music [indeed, ACF have developed an affinity with the current German scene clustered round Kreidler and To Rococo Rot] and we started to use rhythm loops and other warm and exclusive acoustic orchestral sound samples out of this music, which I fortunately had in my collection "

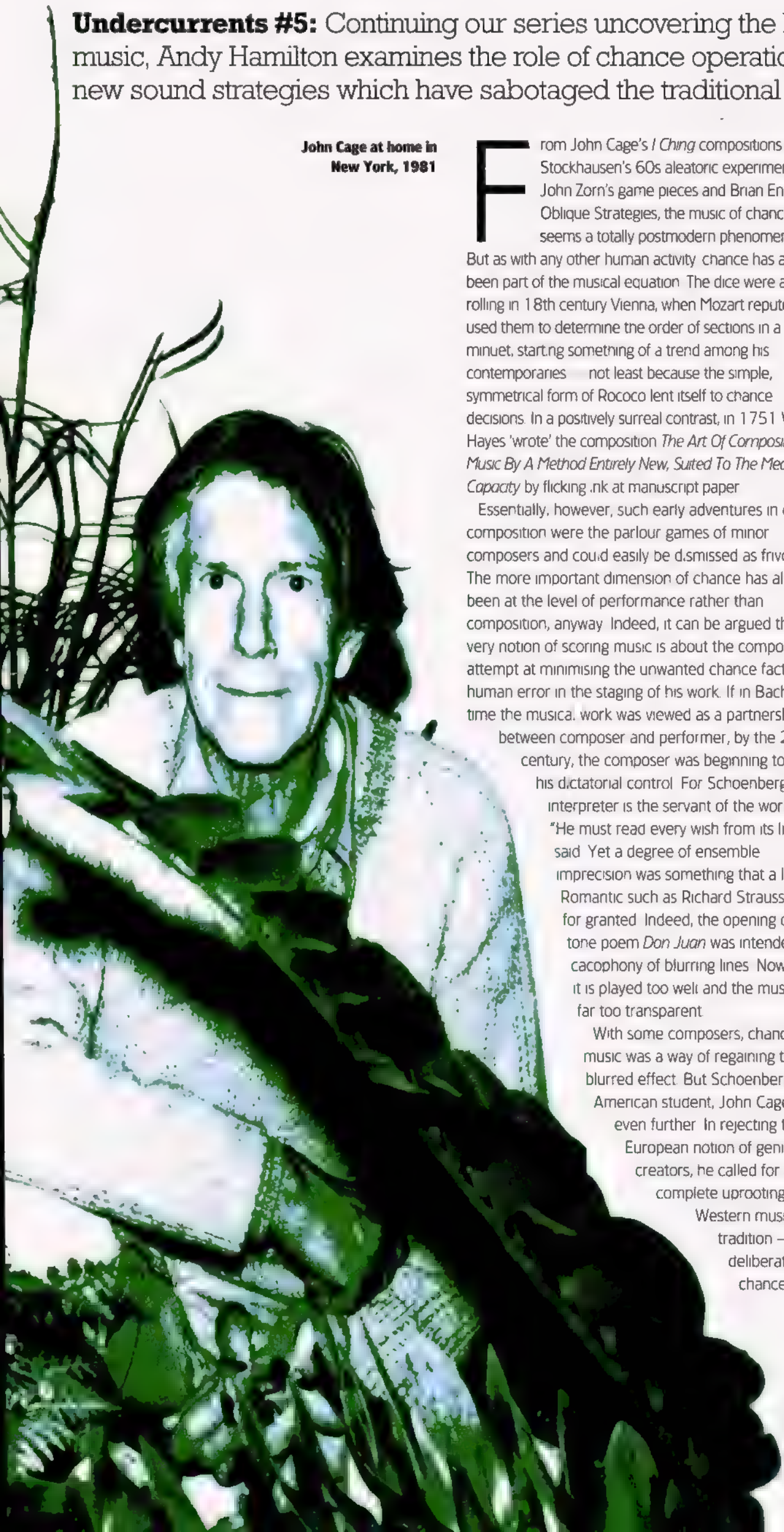
Der Plan finally split in 1992 when Moritz R left to pursue his art career in Hamburg "We had just done a Der Plan tour under the title, Wir Werden Wieder Gebraucht — We Are Needed Again We weren't So we went our separate ways," remarks Frank The first A Certain Frank album, *The End Of No End* (1996), is more overtly electronic than their sampler heavy recent album Their response to the dippy, ultimately hollow utopianism of House and rave, they underline the album's message with their choice of cover art, based on Katharina Fritsch's *Tischgesellschaft*

"Frank Fenstermacher is the original model from which these 32 copies were made," owns up Frank, bashfully "This sculpture became an exemplary metaphor for the dissolution of personality in our modern societies, especially as the discussion about cloning developed Katharina Fritsch was asked by the news magazine *Der Spiegel* who the original one is, and she answered, 'A Certain Frank' So we thought it might be a good idea to reappropriate this anonymous sculptural figure and use it as our image But I have to emphasise, A Certain Frank is also Kurt Pyrolator At least, in the future we all will become A Certain Franks and no one will think anymore that A Certain Frank is just me" □ *A Certain Frank's* The Kreidler/Phoneheads Remixes *EP is on now on Ata Tak*



age of chance

Undercurrents #5: Continuing our series uncovering the hidden wiring of 20th century music, Andy Hamilton examines the role of chance operations and game theories in setting up new sound strategies which have sabotaged the traditional composer/performer hierarchy



John Cage at home in New York, 1981

From John Cage's *I Ching* compositions and Stockhausen's 60s aleatoric experiments to John Zorn's game pieces and Brian Eno's Oblique Strategies, the music of chance seems a totally postmodern phenomenon But as with any other human activity chance has always been part of the musical equation The dice were already rolling in 18th century Vienna, when Mozart reputedly used them to determine the order of sections in a minuet, starting something of a trend among his contemporaries — not least because the simple, symmetrical form of Rococo lent itself to chance decisions In a positively surreal contrast, in 1751 William Hayes 'wrote' the composition *The Art Of Composing Music By A Method Entirely New, Suited To The Meanest Capacity* by flicking ink at manuscript paper

Essentially, however, such early adventures in chance composition were the parlour games of minor composers and could easily be dismissed as frivolous The more important dimension of chance has always been at the level of performance rather than composition, anyway Indeed, it can be argued that the very notion of scoring music is about the composer's attempt at minimising the unwanted chance factor of human error in the staging of his work If in Bach's time the musical work was viewed as a partnership between composer and performer, by the 20th century, the composer was beginning to assert his dictatorial control For Schoenberg, the interpreter is the servant of the work — "He must read every wish from its lips," he said Yet a degree of ensemble imprecision was something that a late Romantic such as Richard Strauss took for granted Indeed, the opening of his tone poem *Don Juan* was intended as a cacophony of blurring lines Nowadays it is played too well and the music is far too transparent

With some composers, chance music was a way of regaining that blurred effect But Schoenberg's American student, John Cage, went even further In rejecting the European notion of genius-creators, he called for a complete uprooting of Western musical tradition — deliberately, by chance

Satie rearranges the furniture

Chance music wasn't entirely without precursors when Cage came to it in the 1940s Erik Satie, Charles Ives and Henry Cowell had already incorporated chance elements in their compositions "It's not a question of Satie's relevance, he's indispensable," Cage wrote in 1958 The French eccentric's love of incongruity favoured the deliberate deployment of accident He used a mosaic technique in *Prélude De La Porte Héroique Du Ciel*, from his Rose+Croix period of the 1890s, when he believed his work was directed by a fanatically pious medieval cleric from beyond the grave (As his sister remarked "My brother was always difficult to understand He doesn't seem to have been quite normal ") He reordered the sections of the piece until he found one he liked, which accounts for its strangely indeterminate succession of unrelated chords

Although composed using chance elements, *Prélude De La Porte Héroique Du Ciel* was then performed as before Some of Charles Ives's scores, by contrast, offered the musicians significant alternatives, while making impossible demands on them with their unrealisable notations Ives greatly influenced the West Coast maverick Henry Cowell, described by Cage in his classic 1961 collection of writings, *Silence*, as "the open sesame for new music in America" Cowell had experimented with what he called "elastic notations" in his *Mosaic Quartet* (1934), which included a selection of fragments to be assembled by the players

Roaring silences

Postmodern methods of collapsing the cultural hierarchies of creator/producer/consumer came later to music than other artforms Found objects, 'automatic writing', action painting, performance art and happenings have long disrupted the certainties of literature and the visual arts Maybe Cage was familiar with the Dadaist Georges Ribement-Dessaignes, who composed dance music with dice But his own method of constructing pieces by tossing coins was generated by consulting the ancient Chinese book of oracles, the *I Ching*, or *Book Of Changes* Introduced to the book by composer Christian Wolff, whose father had published an English translation, Cage applied the method in the last movement of his *Concert For Prepared Piano*, then most dramatically in *Music Of Changes* for piano, both from 1951

Yet Cage's incursions into chance began a little earlier In the late 40s and early 50s, he had formed an unlikely alliance with Pierre Boulez — way before the latter had established himself as IRCAM's notorious autocrat The 'total serialism' Boulez was experimenting with at that time involved trying to predetermine *all* musical parameters — not just pitch but rhythm and dynamics The Cage-Boulez friendship wasn't the complete mis-encounter it might seem On the

PHOTO BETTY FREEMAN/LEBRECHT COLLECTION

contrary, it is often said that chance pieces and totally determined pieces come out sounding very similar — equally arbitrary. Boulez later recognised that his 'automatic' music engendered an entropic kind of anarchy — "chance by the back door". Gradually realising just how opposed his and Cage's viewpoints were, he wrote in 1951, "The only thing, forgive me, which I am not happy about, is the method of absolute chance (by tossing the coins). On the contrary, I believe that chance must be extremely controlled. . . I am a little afraid of what is called 'automatic writing', for most of the time it is chiefly a lack of control. . ." His apologetic murmur developed into an ideological chasm between the two.

If Boulez required discipline with a little freedom, Cage characteristically mixed anarchy and rigour. He set up systems in order to produce unpredictable results. 'Chance' for him was more than just a 'compositional' tool. It was a part of the liberating anti-aesthetic he set out in *Silence*, a philosophy of artistic non-intention, dissolving the difference between art and life. A famous piece in that collection is *Indeterminacy*, a "lecture on composition which is indeterminate with respect to its performance" (as it repeatedly describes itself).

Music Of Changes is not indeterminate in this way, Cage claims. "The function of the performer. . . is that of a contractor who, following an architect's blueprint, constructs a building. That the *Music Of Changes* was composed by means of chance operations identifies the composer with no matter what eventuality. But that its notation is in all respects determinate does not permit the performer any such identification: his work is specifically laid out before him. He is therefore not able to perform from his own centre. . . [It] is an object more inhuman than human, since chance operations brought it into being. The fact that these things that constitute it, though only sounds, have come together to control a human being, the performer, gives the work the alarming aspect of a Frankenstein monster." But, Cage argues, this is essentially no different from the masterpieces of Western music.

Cage soon extended his chance operations. He wrote a piece for the unpredictable output of radio receivers, *Imaginary Landscape No 4* (1951). *4'33"* (1952) is unpredictable simply because ambient sounds are unpredictable. These involve chance occurrences in performances rather than choices by performers. But after he admitted the 'inhumanity' of *Music Of Changes*, he gradually favoured chance in the sense of performer choice — leaving parameters of pitch or rhythm open while specifying duration, for instance. You could call the dice-throwing method 'chance determinism', and chance at the level of performance 'chance indeterminism'.

A popular method of chance indeterminism is graphic notation, which was Cage's chosen weapon for *Fontana Mix* (1958), where the score consists of transparent sheets to be superimposed on each other like a series of map overlays. Graphic devices had already been used by Satie, Ives and Cowell, and most radically in Morton Feldman's *Projection 1* for solo cello (1950), whose score looks like an abstract painting. *The Concert For Piano And Orchestra* of 1957-58 is Cage's masterpiece of indeterminacy in that it has no 'master score'. The conductor's role is purely theatrical, and each player works through their part independently, without coordinating with others.

Cage's proselytising of openness and indeterminacy went down big in the 60s. He wrote in *Silence*: "As contemporary music goes on changing in the way I am changing it what will be done is to more and more completely liberate sounds. . . I am talking and contemporary music is changing."

Among those taking under his influence were Cornelius Cardew, La Monte Young and many neo-Dadaists now forgotten.

John Zorn: bending the rules

Back to Europe: the texture composers

The European avant garde was mostly more cautious when it came to taking chances. Boulez and Stockhausen evolved methods of indeterminacy within strictly defined parameters, such as the 'mobile form' pioneered by Ives and Cowell. On Stockhausen's *Piano Piece XI* (1956), the performer's freedom is fairly limited; they select the order of movements and have some say over internal arrangements, tempo and dynamics. His *Momente* also permits alternative orderings of material. But *Ylem* and *Aus Den Sieben Tagen* are much more open. Clarinettist Anthony Pay reported, "He invites you, for example, [simply] to play in the rhythm of the molecules that constitute your body. Or in the rhythm of the universe. There's a story of a second violin player who said, 'Herr Stockhausen, how will I know when I am playing in the rhythm of the universe?' Stockhausen said, with a smile, 'I will tell you'." He's probably still waiting for the nod. By 1970, Stockhausen had returned to exact notation — his most radical work already completed.

Xenakis's 'stochastic composition' was not really

about chance. But he did write three pieces based on mathematical game theory: *Duel* (1958-59), *Stratégie* (1962) and *Linaia Agon* (1972-82). For instance, *Duel* is a game between two orchestras, with the conductors as active contestants. In her book on Xenakis, Nouritza Matossian suggests that the psychological roots of his interest was the feeling that it was only by chance that his own life had been saved in wartorn Athens.

Xenakis is sometimes bracketed with Lutoslawski, Penderecki and Ligeti as 'texture composers', dealing in sound masses rather than individual tones. Polish composer Witold Lutoslawski's *Venetian Games* (1961) was directly inspired by Cage's *Concert For Piano*. Sections are divided by a fixed percussion signal, and within each section there is a 'collective ad lib'. As the score says, "When the sign for the end of the section is given, the performers must interrupt playing immediately. If by this time a player has already played his part to the end, he should repeat it from the beginning of the section." The result is an 'aleatory (ie chance) counterpoint' — the exact coincidence of individual lines left to chance. 'Aleatoric', by the way, comes from 'alea', Latin for 'dice'. Ligeti's *Poème Symphonique* for 100 metronomes from 1962 was a more radical, completely mechanical example of the same idea.

But for Lutoslawski, the composer had to be left in control. "I firmly believe in a clear delineation of duties between composer and performers," he said, "and I have no wish to surrender even the smallest part of my claim to authorship of even the shortest passage." Cage

PHOTOS: CAGE: BETTY FREEMAN/WWW.BERGHOF.COM/COLLECTION JOHN TIMPANELLI/REDFERNS

badmouthed such "experimenting within tradition". In a 1962 interview he complained that "It doesn't seem to me to radically alter the situation from the familiar convention. It simply takes these new ways of working and consolidates them with the old knowledge. I think we are in a more urgent situation, where it is absolutely essential for us to change our minds fundamentally."

Even strictly limited chance was too much for high culture modernist Elliott Carter. "Aleatoric pieces with any degree of free choice are simply demonstrations of certain general styles or methods of composition without ever becoming concrete individual works in which every detail contributes some way or other to the total effect." Evidently it didn't occur to him that the blurrings were, for the texture composers, an essential part of the total effect.

But the academy has had its share of genuine radicals in the field of chance. One such is Argentinian composer Mauricio Kagel (born 1931). Influenced by Dada and surrealism as well as Cage, his *Match* (1964) features a musical contest between rival cellists, refereed by a percussionist. Like Cage, he rejects "the pure doctrine of improvisation — if indeed this ever existed". Essential to his work is "strict composition with elements which are not themselves pure". In *Exotica* ("For Non-European Instruments", 1970-71), the performers have to try to master the techniques of non-Western instruments, up to a certain point: they're left to furnish the prescribed rhythms with pitches in any register they can manage. Kagel exploits the way that notes of strange instruments and the noises of non-instruments themselves introduce an element of unpredictability — any untried instrument is a little 'aleatory' at first. Interestingly, in a conversation about his *Saint-Bach Passion*, he comments that "totally planned things [as in serialism] and totally arbitrary ones have a similar place" in the shaping of a piece.

Amateur hour: Scratch orchestrators

As Kagel's music shows, unpredictable results follow from asking players to perform beyond their capabilities. For this reason some composers experimented with amateur ensembles, such as Gavin Bryars's Portsmouth Sinfonia from the early 70s, which famously murdered Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* and other popular classics. Bryars encouraged his naive and incompetent amateurs to take their roles seriously and play with heart. But if there was a serious point to the exercise, it probably wasn't shared by Bryars and his players.

The apparently humourless British composer Cornelius Cardew also chose to work with amateurs, as much out of a utopian impulse as a musical one. He started out as a disciple of Stockhausen, before turning to Cage. For a brief period in the 60s he opted for the total improv of AMM, then in 1969 he formed The Scratch Orchestra, from both professional and amateur musicians, to perform autodidactic works such as *The Great Learning*, through which he supplied both the building blocks of sound and some loose architectural plans. How the groups of players variously negotiated his designs didn't only determine its final outcome, the process itself formed a model of social and musical organisation. Cardew became a Maoist and repudiated his mentors, but was killed by a car in 1981 before he had a chance to explain any contradictions between his utopian interpretations of the Great Helmsman's thoughts, and their rather more restrictive application in Mao's China. His AMM improvisations aside, one of the few chance pieces to survive his death is the 193 page *Treatise* in graphic notation.

Oblique Strategists: Mauricio Kagel (left) and Brian Eno

Professional incompetence

The New Complexity composers are also concerned with demanding the impossible of performers, but in their case only *professional* players need apply. In his piano piece *Tilt*, composer Chris Dench asks the performer to make a 'tilt' at the right notes, knowing they're technically impossible to obtain. Brian Ferneyhough's works also require a "desperate virtuosity". Australian composer Ross Bolleter places excessive demands on instruments rather than performers. 1990's *Nallan Void* is a conventional parlour piece, except it specifies the use of an out of tune "ruined piano prepared by its environment" at an outback sheep station. Booming bass notes and clunks where notes don't sound give little indication of the complexities hidden in the score; a different ruined piano would give a completely different result.

Card sharps: Eno and Zorn

Chance operations aren't limited to the 'contemporary classical' tradition. Brian Eno famously evolved a deck of oracle cards, called Oblique Strategies, with the painter Peter Schmidt, which helped David Bowie out of his coke-blocked impasse when he recorded *Low* and *Heroes* in Berlin (both 1977). The cards were modelled on — you guessed it — the *I Ching*, but Eno wasn't appealing to anything as exotic as supernatural forces. "You can believe that they work on a purely behavioural level, simply adjusting your perception at a point, or suggesting a different perception," he said. Like improvisation, they were a mechanical means for altering the dynamics of a creative situation.

But isn't improvisation itself a game of chance? Ornette Coleman aspires to play "without memory". But for most improvisors, improvisation is more risk than chance. Improvisors are always looking for ways of maintaining unpredictability. Conductions by George Lewis with The London Jazz Composers Orchestra, among others, have used numbered cards in a 'mosaic technique', a jazz equivalent of the Boulez/Stockhausen mobile form.

Though Cage condemned the Western classical tradition, it didn't stop John Zorn bracketing him in his condemnation of the "dead, lifeless music" of the "boring old farts". Cage is an anti-type for Zorn, who is essentially an improvisor, not a composer. His game pieces, like *Cobra*, are only 'composed' insofar as they're performed to a score consisting of a series of hand signals, each corresponding to a type of interaction, from quickly-traded bursts of sound to longer free-for-alls. As 'conductor', Zorn simply relays changes to the rest of the players with a hand signal. But the players are permitted 'guerrilla tactics' to try to wrest control from the conductor — an antagonism reminiscent of Xenakis's *Duel*, though Zorn himself more often mentions Mauricio Kagel as an influence. The cue card system fits with Zorn's 'block structure', or filmic technique of juxtaposing fast-moving sections.

Cage moves towards obliterating the creative will. Zorn tries to engage it differently. Cage, of course, wasn't interested in improvisation. At a performance of *Five* in 1990, the players sustained their notes and not the silences because, evidently, they felt they had too little to play. "They weren't supposed to improvise!" he complained. Cage wasn't interested in the idea of performers expressing themselves, because *he* wasn't interested in expressing himself. His denial of self-expression is the ideal that all chance music aspires towards. But few composers or improvisors are egoless enough to follow the Zen Master the whole way. Not intentionally, anyway. ☐ *Special thanks to Mark Sinker and Rob Young*

PHOTOS: KAGEL: UNIVERSAL EDITION AG; ENO: ERICA ECHENBERG/REDFERNS

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Radio Shanghai 15

Chocolate Weasel Music For Body Lockers (Ninja Tune)
Zion Train Cuttle Fish (Universal Egg)
Jean Derome Je Me Souviens. Hommage À Georges Perec (Ambiances Magnetiques)
Mogwai Cody, Kappa (Matador)
Kocani Orkestar The Orient Is Red (Alula)
13 O'Clock 1000 Times (Rock House)
Various Anthology Of World Music (Rounder)
Bireli Lagrene Ensemble Bluma (Jazzpoint)
Red Richards Idaho (Jazzpoint)
Joane Hetur Anges (Ambiances Magnetiques)
The Olivia Tremor Control Grass Canyons (Flydaddy)
Susanna Lindeborg Red Stone (LJ Records)
Black 47 Desperate (Gadfly)
Various Texas Twister Radio Records Vol 1 (Texas Twister)
Click Blood (Abyss)
Compiled by Jonathan, Radio Shanghai International, *PO Box 440212 West Somerville, MA 02144, USA*

WCSB 15

Nimoy/Unit Moebius/Electronics For Defense Ancient Melodies (God Factory)
Sunroof Delicate Autobahn Under Construction (VHF)
COH Enter Tinnitus (Rastermusic)
Inertia Tone Der Ubereinstimmung (World Foundations)
Pierre Henry La Reine Verte (Philips)
Fennesz Fennesz Plays (MoiKai)
Bruce Haack Electric Lucifer (Columbia)
Dylan Group More Adventures In Lying Down (Bubble Core)
Zyklus II Track One (Magnetron)
Tomorrowland Subtractive Synthesis 12" (Darla)
Kreidler Appearance And The Park (Kiff SM)
Trans Am Futureworld (Thrill Jockey)
Aphex Twin Windowlicker (Warp)
Funkstörung Additional Productions (Studio K7!)
Kirlian Porzellangasse Grooves Part 1 (Sähko)
Compiled by WCSB 89.3 FM, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, Thursdays 9-11pm

Whisper On A String 15

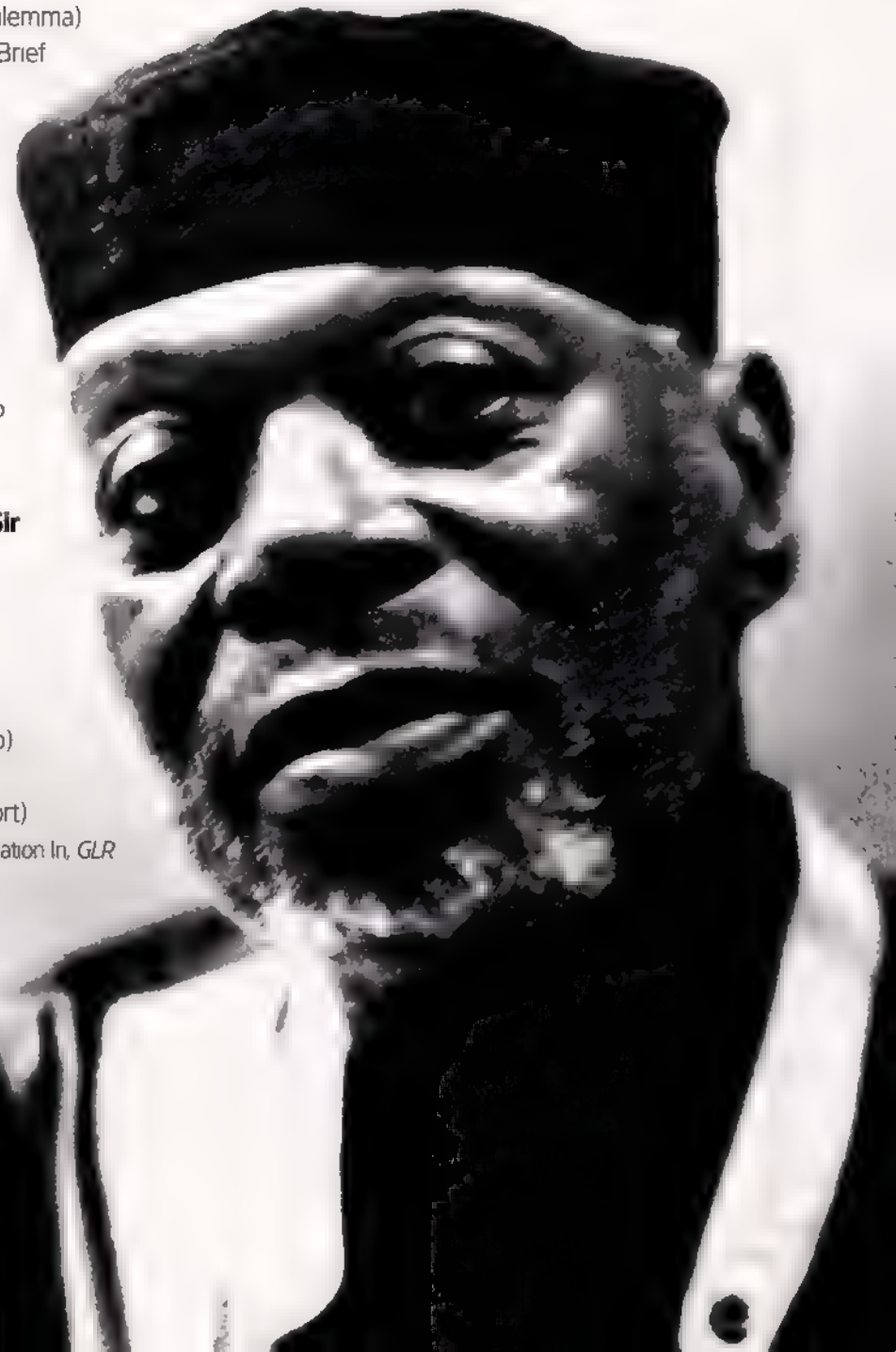
Jack Smith Silent Shadows On Cinemaroc Island (Table Of The Elements)
Susie Ibarra/Denis Charles Drum Talk (Wobbly Rail)
David Tudor Rainforest (Mode)
Alan Licht/Loren MazzaCane Connors Hoffman Estates (Drag City)
Hermann Nitsch Das Orgien Mysterien Theater (Dom America)
A Handful Of Dust The Philosophick Mercury (Corpus Hermeticum)
The Master Musicians Of Joujouka Joujouka Black Eyes (Sub Rosa)
First Avenue Shreds Of Evidence (OO)
Chris Watson Outside The Circle Of Fire (Touch)
Soft Machine Third (Columbia)
Various Tokyo Flashback (PSF)
David Shea Prisoner (Sub Rosa)
Henry Cow Western Culture (ESD)
John Duncan CV Massage (Dark Vinyl)
Jeb Bishop 98 Duets (Wobbly Rail)
Compiled by Steven Lance Ledbetter, Whisper On A String, *WRAS 88.5 FM, Atlanta, USA, Mondays midnight-2am*

Destination In 15

Todd Terry Resolutions (Innocent)
Jadell Can You Hear Me? (Ultimate Dilemma)
Natacha Atlas & David Arnold One Brief Moment (Mantra promo)
Barrington Levy Too Experienced The Best Of (VP)
Run DMC What's It All About (Profile)
Black Star featuring Common Respiration (Rawkus)
The Mexican Straight Out The Cat Litter (Catskills)
The Irresistible Force Fish Dances EP (Ninja Tune)
Cylob Rewind (Rephlex)
DJ Spooky featuring Kool Keith & Sir Menelik Object Unknown (Virgin promo)
Telepopmusik An Ordinary Life (Catalogue)
Danmass Time Stand (Dust 2 Dust)
Jason Jinx The NY Experience (promo)
Curtis Mayfield Curtis (Sequel)
Lil' Louis Jupiter (Warehouse US import)
Compiled by Ross Allen and Matt Hall, Destination In, *GLR (London) 94.9 FM, Wednesdays 8-10:30pm*

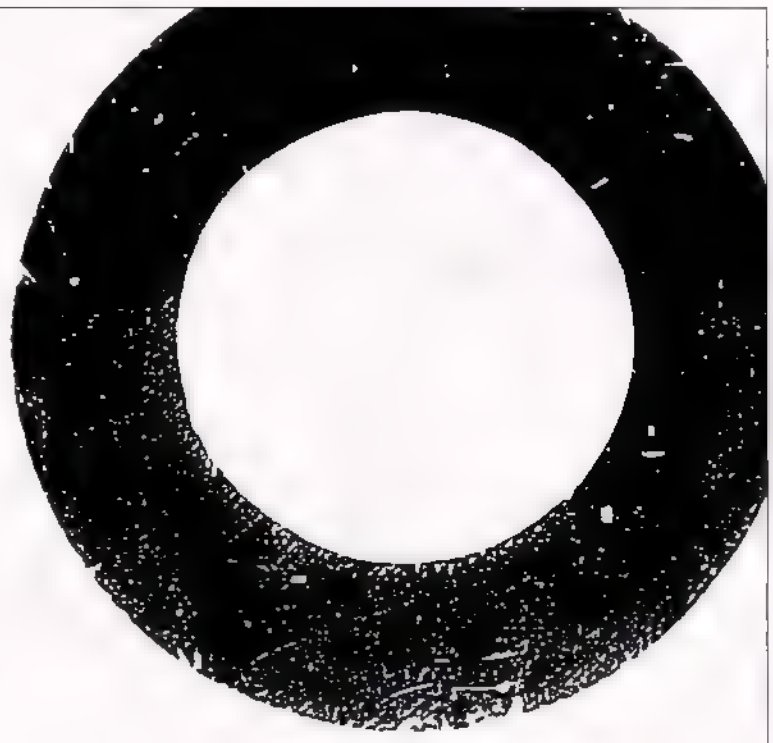
The Office Ambience

Cecil Taylor/Dewey Redman/Elvin Jones Momentum Space (Verve)
Tony Allen Black Voices (Comet)
Phil Durrant/Alexander Frangenheim Further Lock (Concepts Of Doing)
Mauricio Kagel Exotica (Koch Schwann)
Atari Teenage Riot Revolution Action EP (DHR)
Acid Mothers Temple Pataphisical Freak Out MU (PSF)
Funkstörung Additional Productions (Studio !K7)
Suetsu & Underwood The Love Album (Diskono)
Various Artists RFT (Din 12")
Angels Of Light/Michael Gira New Mother (Young God)
Purple Trap Decided (Tzadik)
Schizotrope Le Plan (Sub Rosa)
A Certain Frank Kreidler/Phoneheads Remixes (Atatak)
Meat Puppets Live In Montana (Rykodisc)
Toe 2000 Toe 2000 (Atavistic/Truckstop)
Compiled by The Wire *Sound System*



Dewey Redman

PHOTO GERT DE RUYTER



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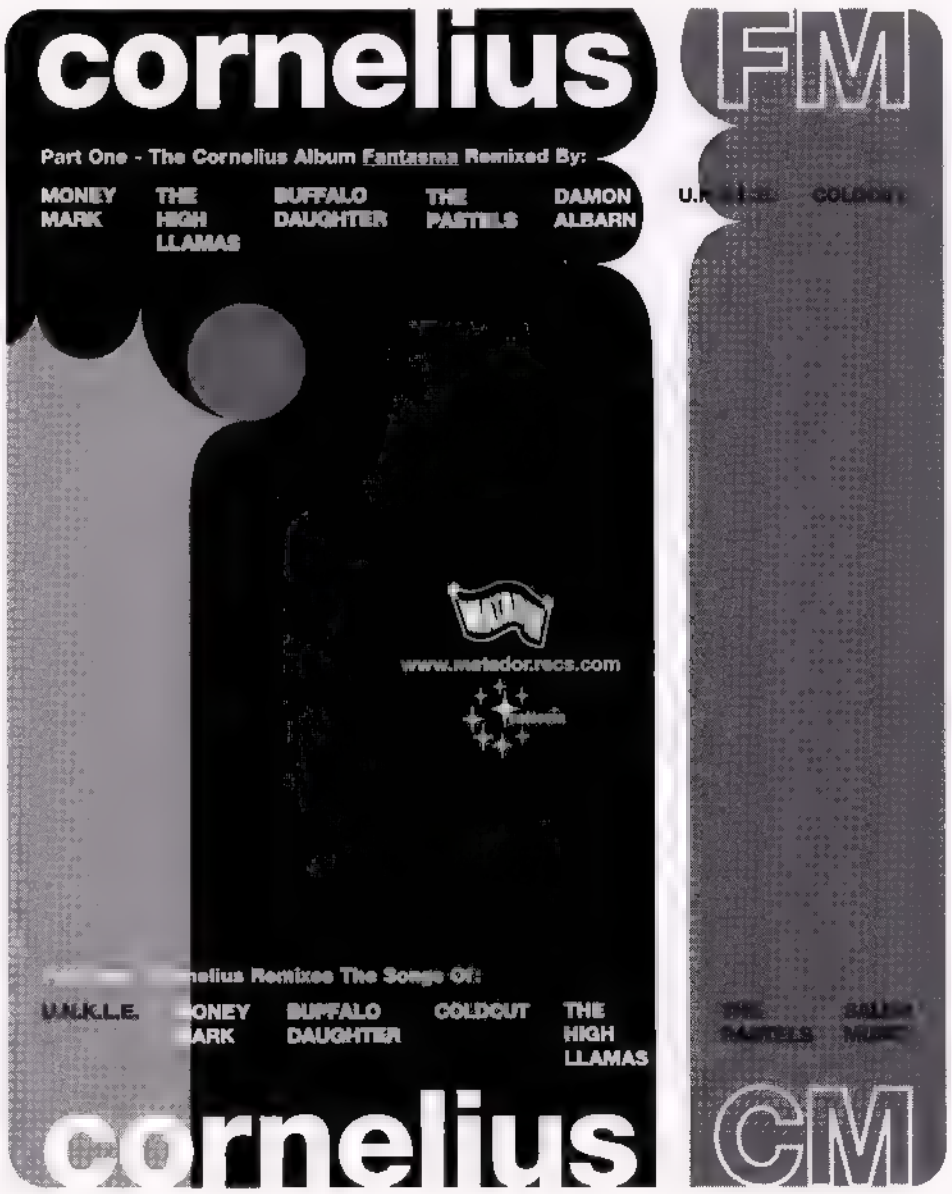

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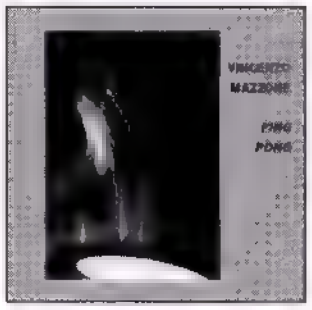
LEO LAB CD 053
BERTRAND DENZLER CLUSTER; *Y?*
Bertrand Denzler Cluster is Benoit Delbecq - piano, Hélène Labarrière - bass, Norbert Pfammatter - drums, and Bertrand Denzler - tenor saxophone. The goal of this group is to play colourful, energetic and living music while exploring the space between composition and improvisation. The recording has been made by Radio DRS at the jazz festival in Schaffhausen.

LEO LAB CD 054 **STATEMENTS QUINTET**
THE CAT'S PYJAMAS
Statements Quintet is half German half American: Ursel Schlicht - piano, Hans Tammen - guitar, Dominic Duival - bass, Jay Rosen - drums, Christoph Irmer - violin. This quintet, which started as a duo of Ursel Schlicht and Hans Tammen in 1989, has developed a personal language and a totally unique sound which make them instantly identifiable. Total time: 59'18.

LEO LAB CD 0055 **BRETT LARNER/ SHOKO HIKAGE/PHILIP GELB**
INDISTANCING
Live recording where Brett Larner's koto is heard on the right channel and Shoko Hikage's koto is on the left channel The shakuhachi player Philip Gelb is heard in the middle. Extensive notes by the master musician Tetsu Saitoh suggest that the group has started a new experiment with various sound possibilities, and the consequences of the experiment may be unpredictable.



LEO LAB CD 056
VINCENZO MAZZONE; *PING PONG*
Apart from playing solo drums, the drummer with the Italian Instabile Orchestra Vincenzo Mazzone, employed two large groups to create this CD: Pino Minafra's "Sud Ensemble" and "Sud Percussion Group" consisting of nine musicians. Vincenzo's vision is the birth of the planets and of human beings. With the help of his fellow drummers he creates a fantastic percussive cosmology.

LEO LAB CD 057
NOT MISSING DRUMS PROJECT
OFFLINE ADVENTURE
The follow-up to the highly succesful first release (Leo Lab CD 036 - Urban Voices) involving twenty musicians and 23 pieces of music Two main composers who hold the huge project together are Joachim Gies and Thomas Böhm-Christle There are hints of jazz, new music, free improvisation, classical and pop music, but the familiar appears in new shades, unexpected turns, unpredictable twists. Total duration: 66'33

LEO LAB CD 058
THE CLARINET TRIO; *OCT. 1, '98*
The Clarinet Trio is two bassclarinetists Gebhard Ullmann and Theo Nabicht, and a clarinetist Jurgen Kupke. "Oct. 1, '98" is a mixture of compositions and improvisations highlighting certain "abstracted idioms" as well as the different musical backgrounds of the three musicians from contemporary to New Orleans type of music. Previous releases by Gebhard Ullmann on Soul Note and other labels received outstanding reviews.

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sound check

On the deck: May's selected albums and 12''s

reviews a-z

Airto
Angels Of Light
Atari Teenage Riot
Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band
The Body Lovers/The Body Haters
Graham Bowers
Ester Brinkmann
Chicago Underground Trio
Michel Chion
Crank
Cyclobe
Toumani Diabate with Ballake Sissoko
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György Ligeti
One World Ensemble
Jochem Paap
Ivo Perelman
Purple Trap
Steve Reich
Ernst Reijseger with Tenore E Cuncordu De Orosei
Sam Rivers & Alex Von Schlippenbach
Paul Schütze
Shakti
Matthew Shipp Duo
Smadj
Sprawl
Such
Damo Suzuki Band
Swans
To Rococo Rot
Tortoise + The Ex
Various: *The Raga Guide*
We°

Plus new reissues and compilations, and avant rock, critical beats, electronica, global, hiphop, jazz and other limits reviews in brief

Atari Teenage Riot
60 Second Wipe Out
DIGITAL HARDCORE RECORDINGS DHRCD20 CD

In an eloquent manifesto, written for *Maximum Rock 'N' Roll*, Steve Albini once declared, "I can dig The Ramones and The Birthday Party and The Stooges and SPK and Minor Threat and Whitehouse and Link Wray and Chrome and Pere Ubu and Rudimentary Peni and The Four Skins and Throbbing Gristle and Skrewdriver and The Ex and US Chaos and Gang Green and The Swans and Bad Brains all at the same time, and if you can't then fuck you."

Though 15 years old, Albini's declaration fits Atari Teenage Riot like a glove — which means that Big Black's previously unassailable position as the best 'fuck you' rock group of all time is now under serious threat. *60 Second Wipe Out* sounds like all of the above, plus Crass, Public Enemy, Ministry, Prodigy, Panacea, Fear Factory, and 1000 malfunctioning computers being channelled simultaneously through pirated digital circuitry and augmented by a breathless rush of angry shouting. It is at once deadly serious and spectacularly funny, and for anyone who still craves the incredible, electric joy sparked by rampaging, righteous noise, it is nothing short of fantastic.

Alec Empire's garish quartet of sloganeering Technopunks have not always been so effective. Their first couple of records were released in 1993 by Phonogram, when they sounded like a badly produced Jesus Jones. But as their major label deal funded DHR, I'm prepared to forgive and forget. Five years down the line, Atari Teenage Riot are a frantic, twisted pile-up of every response mechanism that music has ever discovered, a bewildering, exhilarating cascade of flight-or-fight signals. Drawn-out, erectile snare rolls, militant Oi! drumming, scrawny, bleached out agitprop guitar riffs, rolling, pummelling breakbeats, rattling, gonzoid Jungle, the best inhuman screaming (courtesy Hanin Elias) to come out of Berlin since Blixa Bargeld. ATR's relentless energy exploits every trick in the book to invoke and channel furious delirium.

The lyrics — reproduced in all their random glory in the CD booklet — operate along similar lines. Barely coherent, strewn with exclamation marks, they make Crass's Steve Ignorant sound like Bob Dylan. But the sense of a scattershot fury mainlining on its own impetus is gloriously clear. Like Old School rave MCs, ATR are on a ceaseless mission to exhort, and their words push frenetically at every button they can reach. The opening track and single, "Revolution Action", is a case in point. *"Action! It's time to live and it's time to die!"* they remorsely repeat, before pitching in with, *"Revolution action! What we gonna go for?"* — again hammered out ad nauseam.

This sort of behaviour is bound to invite criticism. From the fatalistic, self-absorbed ghetto of the arthouse, ATR will no doubt seem cartoonish, juvenile, simplistic, or just plain stupid. Anyone taking that view, however, will miss out on some of the most uncompromisingly virulent electronic noise of the year. And unlike, say, Masonna, this noise is no esoteric taste to be smugly or safely indulged — this is untamed, streetsmart, mongrel noise in raw and restless motion. It defies assimilation, demands engagement, and makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. It is state of the art, it is punk as fuck *and* you can dance to it. And if there were any justice in the world, Atari Teenage Riot would be on *Top Of The Pops*, introducing a new generation to the fierce pleasure of perpetual revolution.

CHRIS SHARP

Graham Bowers
Pilgrim
RED WHARF RW004 CD

The latest otherworldly communique from Anglesey is subtitled "A Prelude To Pilgrim's Progress". Does this mean that Graham Bowers has begun another largescale partwork to follow the trilogy comprising *Of Mary's Blood*, *Transgression* and *Eternal Ghosts*? I hope so, for each new recording confirms the distinctiveness of Bowers's musical vision.

Crucially, he uses the studio as a compositional medium, processing instrumental source materials generated by a community of musicians, who are evidently content that their efforts should be transformed beyond recognition. Into that transmogrified sonic environment, Bowers introduces in unprocessed form, eminently familiar elements. In its new context, a snippet of the consoling standard "Blue Skies" sounds inexplicably unsettling. The tinny clangour of an upright piano, or the desiccated rattling of a snare drum, are made strange.

As a painter, Bowers understands well the workings of perspective, and his most successful musical effects follow from skilled manipulation of acoustic zones of recession. His utilisation of the middle distance is especially striking. There animated activity

assumes a blurred form, discernible yet indistinct. Deciphering the event becomes a compulsive challenge, as acoustic phenomena simultaneously proclaim their identity and deny it. Listeners aware of his previous work will anticipate the metaphysical figures adorning the cover. Hovering between abstraction and narrative comprehensibility they illustrate perfectly the qualities that make the 49 minutes of *Pilgrim* such a pleasurably uncanny experience.

JULIAN COWLEY

Ester Brinkmann

Weiße Nachte

SUPPOSE 3932513118 CD

Wearing the name of his dead sister Esther, Thomas Brinkmann carries on his highly individual take on Cologne Techno translating onto CD the small cuts and strokes of noise that he previously inscribed directly onto vinyl, half in a vein of geometrical sonic minimalism, and half as a form of mourning, a symbolic exploration of absence, hurt and repetition.

Not surprisingly the move from vinyl has changed the music, but the mourning has continued. Coming more clearly out of the arthouse closet than the club room, *Weiße Nächte* (taken from the French 'Nuits Blanches', meaning sleepless nights) is something of a complete departure from the Techno remit, in that all the tracks are built around recordings of the late Romanian philosopher and post-Nietzschean aphorist EM Cioran, expounding in a vigorous conversational French and German on the nature of insomnia, suicide, boredom and nothingness. Techno's night-time ecstatic energy has been co-opted for commentary by the high priest of nocturnal ennui.

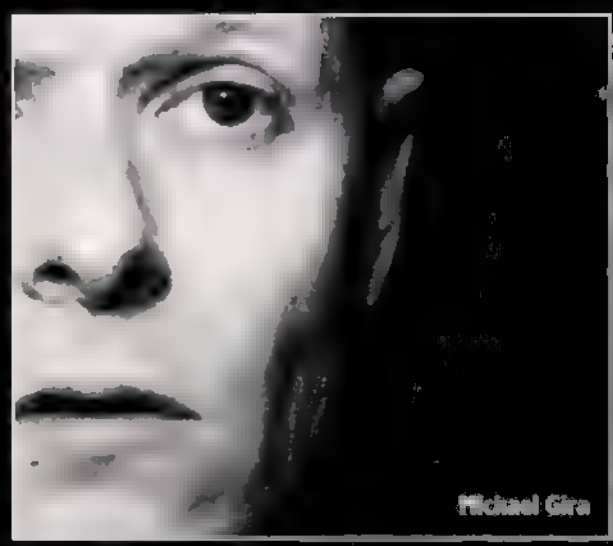
Intriguingly, Brinkmann swathes Cioran's short missives on life beyond the pleasure principle in a series of dated wallpaper musical atmospheres — lite jazz, a faded waltz — and at the same time weaves into these, in an unobtrusive way, his more usual repetitive scuffs, ticks and thuds and liminal, hissing resonances. The whole effect is not far from the scuffed photo of a room featured on the CD cover — a portrait of nowhere dressed up in banal synthetic furnishings, intimate yet impersonal, seemingly soulless yet bearing the disturbing patina of history and pathos like suburban stigmata.

As Cioran warms to his topics, a psychic raconteur with a voice that sounds like Beckett's face, pricks of sound trigger little series of echoes around his voice, sometimes like a CD skipping, sometimes he's just accompanied with background bar noises. When a soft multitracked trumpet comes in to round off "Wenn Du Nicht Mehr Lachen Kannst" ("When You Can't Laugh Anymore") the mixture of sketchy and bruised off-kilter pathos is strangely reminiscent of Robert Wyatt. A long way from Cologne.

MATT FFYTCHE

ATR's Alec Empire

PHOTO WANDY



Swans
Various Failures (1988-92)
YOUNG GOD/FRINGECORE FR002 2XCD

The Body Lovers/The Body Haters
The Body Lovers/The Body Haters
YOUNG GOD FRINGECORE FR001 2XCD

Angels Of Light
New Mother
YOUNG GOD/FRINGECORE FR003 CD

What do you think of Michael Gira? If you trust received truth, you may have let him stalk on by, slip your trust, lost to a false and deceiving imago of noise sadist, hate tapist, a man too faux Wagnerian for his own good. But for such a loud man, his progress has been stealthy, and you may suddenly realise that a) you harbour a massive admiration for this guy who seems to have learned his work rate and play state alike from Bukowski; and b) you don't know his oeuvre half as well as you should.

Various Failures is a good place to start. I was once guilty of harbouring a cliched perception of Swansong, until steered into *White Light From The Mouth Of Infinity* and their ill-fated 'major label' play *The Burning World*... and *Failures* is a handy resume of just this suspension bridge time (88-92). What's more, it works not just to recoup a crucial flux Gira-period, but serves also to restore your wavering faith that there might be a point to such CD archive jobs. Excellent programming, beautiful cover art, full lyrics, various historical surprises: this is what CD recaps should be like, OK?

Here is a compilation which necessarily makes us *listen again*. Alternate takes, edifying versions: history as surplus. It contains songs that are so revivifying they could be sold behind a pharmacy counter. The *"sinking leadweight"* of "Failure" (a singular late 20th century ultraviolet blues) is followed by the literally childlike plea/rebound of "Identity" (*"Now I'm breathing the breath of God/and the cold wind clears my mind... my heart is made of light/and my hands contain the sky"*) Talking of revivifying — Swans are one of the great covers groups. Joy Division's "Love Will Tear Us Apart" and Nick Drake's "Black Eyed Dog" must top any list of songs you should think twice about covering. But this is precisely what Jarboe/Gira do: *think* these songs twice — make us listen again to hear in disparate texts common threads of human frailty and failing and fortitude. "Love Will..." seemed to throw some liberating switch deep within Gira — like the feeling some of us got reading Bataille for the first time — causing all the preconceived genre lines to suddenly buckle and melt, leaving no safe estate of 'fiction'/'poem'/'song'/'rant'/'theology'/'treatise'. There is serious beauty here which could sit like a camouflage trap on daytime Radio 2. Jarboe's rendering of Steve Winwood's "Can't Find My Way Home" is all modal swerve, tabla flutter, quaver, prayerful incantation. Like the Swansleeve sketches of bunny creatures, it's simultaneously easy on the eye/ear and delicately *unheimlich*. One moment, Swansound is like a kitten purring in your lap; then — pounce! — there are bones and fur and blood all over your carpet.

Gira may be behind the most genuinely *needy* songs of our time — be it immediate need (for drink, flesh, friendship) or the need for new knowledge, new ritual, new prayer. Far from unrelieved pessimism, there are subtle codified negotiations of hope and terror running like veins in marble through the Gira career. His new solo project, Angels Of Light, raises a slight worry that Gira has been seduced by his own caricature — the grim lyricism sounds almost faked, by rote, a fallback. (The opposite of Gira-lite: Gira-heaveeey.) He could do worse than heed the warning example of Mark Eitzel, whose recent lacklustre solo sets prove that more naked isn't necessarily truer; or the opposite instance of Nick Cave, whose new lyric simplicity is enormously affecting. The paradox, which must mean something, is that Gira sounds more convincingly 'himself' on the lusher and 'happier' songs (albeit that 'happier' is a deeply relative term in this context): "Forever Yours" and "The Garden Hides The Jewel" especially are as beams of spring light through rain dark sky. I don't think it would do Gira any harm to *un*learn some of his more baroque strophes — far from selling his art short it might well extend and intensify his visionary reach.

The dominant Swansound can morph within the space of a year, an album, a song — and maybe Swans' lack of wider recognition is part and parcel of their ever shifting identity (as) crisis. Now compiled for European release with its successor, The Body Haters, the latest plot of Gira's ongoing Body Lovers project — dredging the undulant bed of Ambient for true grit — is a genuinely *double* CD. It seems to possess a real core sense of its own identity, unlike a lot of one-note 'Ambient', which merely repeats common tics and samples from a shallow reservoir. *Body Lovers* is something like a subversive act of listening in itself — for body tremors, elisions, scrapes, scares. Far from seamless, it sounds like someone learning a new language one minute, before lurching into a long ceremonial of mourning the next. *Body Lovers/Haters* isn't only playing with texture, drone, soundwall, but with notions of inner/outer reach. This, rather than the more cliched moments of *New Mother*, sounds like the logical niche for Gira's creative frustration, his sense of being right up against edges of articulation, repetition, rage, impotence. He has always played — sometimes extremely — with notions of the artist's body as private/public property... and paradoxically *Body*'s all but wordless sound strip may be his deftest (self/Other) embodiment yet.

It also made me think of the forbidding barbed wire terrain of Walker's *Tilt*, and made me wonder whether Gira hasn't thought of commingling the Angel with the Body: his next best step might be to arrange a drunken welding or alchemical marriage between these two blue poles. Such a reinvented Gira could be a strange new beast indeed. One thing is sure: for such a stock doomcore cliche, Gira's swansong remains a sharp and many hued spring.

IAN PENMAN

Chicago Underground Trio
Possible Cube
DELMARK 511 CD

Trio members Rob Mazurek, on cornet, and drummer Chad Taylor made a vital contribution to Alan Licht and Loren MazzaCane Connors's excellent *Hoffman Estates*. *Possible Cube* might well be its chamber equivalent. After all, it shares *Hoffman Estates'* spaciousness, a quality which signifies artful shaping of acoustic relationships rather than airy drifting.

For all its abundant stylistic variation, the album's 17 tracks have an overall evenness that creates the effect of listening to a single continuous work. Unerringly fine judgement in performance and production has resulted in a dynamic cohesiveness. As usual, Mazurek's playing invokes Don Cherry, and the Trio can switch on jazz attitude at will. But this is not a music of soloist and accompaniment, rather, all instruments seem to have been assigned equal value. Taylor's percussion punctuates and lifts, light and articulate, never threatening to overwhelm. Bassist Noel Kupersmith, completing the trio, is alternately buoyant and fibrous, as circumstances demand. At three play vibraphone, creating lilting rhythms as well as coloristic effects, and on two pieces guest Jeff Parker adds organ. Where *Hoffman Estates* harked back consciously to the creative partnership of Miles Davis and Teo Macero, *Possible Cube* is more suggestive of Art Ensemble Of Chicago in *Urban Bushmen* mode. In both instances, form is realised as a function of texture. Such a conception allows the music to preserve the vitality and freshness of unfettered improvisation, while observing the economy of rigorous composition.

JULIAN COWLEY

Michel Chion
L'Opéra Concret
MCE 001 CD

Attracted to its pictorial qualities, Michel Chion has described musique concrète as an "opera for the ear". Following an operatic structure, each track on *L'Opéra Concret* constitutes a different scene while contributing to a seamless whole.

But *L'Opéra Concret* isn't only a vivid illustration of musique concrète's suggestive powers. Montaged from 18 works composed over the last 26 years, it is also a capsule

review of Chion's musical range. The eerie textures of "Crayonnés Ferroviaires" are built up from shadowy voices and the sounds of a prepared piano, while the bustling, expansive ambiences of "La Ronde" recall the soundtrack of French film classics like *Les Enfants Du Paradis*. The disc also includes an extract from "Requiem", perhaps Chion's best-known work, replete with terrifying voices, plus more melodramatic pieces such as "La Tentation De Saint Antoine" (featuring the voice of Pierre Schaeffer), while the concluding track endlessly repeats a moving extract from *The Magic Flute*. Now as always, Michel Chion's preferred medium is magnetic tape, which possibly accounts for the disc's unpolished, somewhat naïve quality. On "Crayonnes Ferroviaires", Chion even recites a text swearing his allegiance to tape: *"A certain way of creating a sound with bumps, hiccoughs, jolts and snags in its line, a living texture,"* he rhapsodises, *"a sound that is in some way imprecise, with chiaroscuro, with fading — this way is only possible with tape."*

More than just a romp through a distinguished musical career, *L'Opéra Concret* is also an homage to an almost obsolescent medium.

RAHMA KHAZAM

Crank
Wanton Phenomena
MILLE PLATEAUX MP64 CD

Until recently nu electronica more or less turned on a UK/European axis. But 1999 has already been marked by an explosion of American productions, discharging shrapnel loaded with new shapes and possibilities. With *Wanton Phenomena*, Crank's Danny Zelonky steps out of his Low Res/Plug Research persona to deliver a staggering album of cavernous, ever shifting electronics.

Cleverly conceived and engineered, the album forges a crumbling, deterritorialised headspace, whose prehistory (in terms of effect) lies in the brilliant barrages of Mark Stewart's first albums, Royal Trux's *Twin Infinitives*, Disco Inferno circa *DI Go Pop*, or even Mover's *Final Sickness* (which similarly suggests an automated, battlezone apocalypse).

Made up of dark atmospherics, skittering, glitchy rhythms, some seriously foggy, freaked out loops and FX, its tracks map a treacherous minefield of asymmetrical occurrences, earthshifts and random explosions (hence the title's euphemism, 'wanton phenomena') that constantly derail the listener's expectations. Each fresh hearing yields new details. "Jerk" rocks the body through a zone of crunchy electro beats before dissolving in a field of cloud hiss. On "Infantrie Narcosis" and "Discompose", reverb-heavy melodies drift hazily through the textural melee. "10"+" is a gorgeously low key voidscape, while the Merzbow-like "Vzhiu Vzhiu" is filled with bucking chunks of digital dirt, grit blasts and all manner of movement.

Following breakthroughs by the likes of DJ Disk, Matmos, Terre Thaemlitz and Miami's Schematic label, Crank's *Wanton Phenomena* is another stunning advance for US electronica.

DAVE HOWELL

Cyclobe
Luminous Darkness
PHANTOM CODE OMC001 CD

Cyclobe is the new project from Steven Thrower, best known for his work with Coil, and Simon Norris, ex-Death in June. *Luminous Darkness* promises "hovering threats and imminent ecstasies", which their startling exploitation of their sound sources delivers in abundance. The black on black disc print acts as a clue. Andre Breton spoke of the 'blackness' in the Surrealist suicide of Jean-Pierre Duprey, claiming that it presented a spectrum that yielded nothing to the solar spectrum in diversity. The same appraisal could equally be applied to Cyclobe. However, their delineation of personal arcana and exploration of private obsessions reveal tenebrous delights rather than lugubrious visions.

Working with samples and conventional instruments, theirs is an art of mutant combinations. Sax, violin, and other sources are mixed into an electroacoustic soundscape of inhuman voices and humming electrical activity. Samples refuse to betray their sources, leaving the music poised in a most delicate and deft balancing act.

Coil comparisons are inevitable, even if they're mostly wide of the mark. However, Cyclobe do pursue a somewhat similar modus operandi when it comes to the delirious, psychedelic warping of sound. A tendency towards abstraction doesn't preclude the inclusion of dramatic elements. On the contrary, they insist that sounds function as vectors for energies "both alien and intimate". Prefiguring the silence at the end of it all, "Each And Every Word Must Die" is beautifully desolate, concluding a stunning debut album in a shimmer of melody and crackling noise.

JOHN EVERALL

Toumani Diabate with Ballake Sissoko
New Ancient Strings
HANNIBAL HN1428 CD

New Ancient Strings will surely prove to be a defining moment in the history of recorded kora music. Toumani Diabate is a virtuosic exponent of the Malian harp-lute, whose artistry reached a wider audience through *Songhai*, his 1989 collaboration with bassist Danny Thompson and members of the flamenco group Ketama.

He belongs to one of Mali's most venerable musical families, his father being the esteemed kora master Sidiki Diabate, so he is steeped in a tradition that continues to evolve within his own playing, and through his own compositions.

On *New Ancient Strings* he is paired with Ballake Sissoko, a close friend since childhood, for a series of intimate yet dazzling kora duets. The characteristically melifluous rippling of the instrument won immediate favour with British audiences when Gambian musician Dembo Konte toured during the late 1980s. In America, Foday Musa Suso, another Gambian, secured an appreciative following, taking the kora onto new terrain through his collaborations with Don Cherry, Herbie Hancock, and Philip Glass. But the wellsprings of the Gambian tradition lay to the east, in Mali. Diabate and Sissoko were nourished at that source. They now explore contemporary possibilities without hybridisation, relying rather upon the technical potential of the instrument and their own innate musicality. On this evidence, Toumani has attained a stature which rivals that of his father. The rarity of such lucid and substantially beautiful music makes *New Ancient Strings* indispensable.

JULIAN COWLEY

Die Like A Dog Quartet
Little Birds Have Fast Hearts No 2
FMP 101 CD

Sprawl
Sprawl
TROST TR070 CD

These two projects showcase the breadth of Peter Brötzmann's musical engagement. Die Like A Dog Quartet is his ongoing Ayler tribute. Compared to the self-titled 1994 album, this release (the second to be culled from a 1997 live performance) shows the group taking a different slant on its prime inspiration.

Though all the compositions are credited to Brötzmann, a signature element of the current sound is the corkscrewing gymnastics of Toshinori Kondo's electronically treated trumpet. His blurred and delayed sound is particularly effective when he's running at speed. Brötzmann himself plays tarogato and clarinet as well as tenor.

The album begins with two linked, relatively pensive, longer pieces, which are a long way from the inspirited raptures of Ayler. The music rests on the bouncy castle constructed by rhythm section William Parker and Hamid Drake. Here, Parker is at his most oblique, and Drake continually remodels the pulse. Never static, their rhythms take on the character of an ever-modulating, semi-autonomous active drone, over which Kondo and Brötzmann develop their cagey, truncated statements. Brötzmann makes much of the peculiar timbre of the tarogato and the melancholic cast of the clarinet. What they have picked up on in Ayler is a note of lament, at the heart of this set is a pregnant, mournful phrase that is remoulded in many different ways. The third track is the slow movement, sending out loose threads of gloomy speculation. The closing track is an exciting four minute blast that finally broaches some of the anger and

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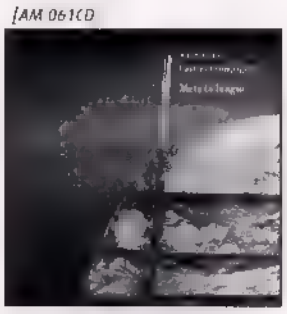

JOANE HÉTU
Castor et compagnie: Mets ta langue *[AM 062CD]*

JOANE HÉTU
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Nous perçons les oreilles
[AM 054CD]

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30 seconds into the first track of *Sprawl*, William Parker's melismatic arco bass is joined by mooing electronics, announcing that this is a project with a sound of its own. That distinctiveness develops through the interplay between rough-edged electronics and high energy acoustic input. Alongside Parker and Brotzmann, the group features Alex Buess (of God Ice and Phantom City) on reeds and electronics, Stephan Wittwer on guitar, and group leader Michael Wertmuller on drums. Wertmuller drives the music along at a hammering pace — "Marter Der Metall" is a train out of control racing through a landscape filled with bleatings, grunts and assorted chainsaw massacres. The music steers clear of full-on noise cliche, carving out a coherent trail of sound marked by repetition.

Clattering percussion tangles with Parker's oblique little phrases and subterranean excursions. Brotzmann and Buess issue commanding belches. If there's a disappointment, it's that the otherwise excellent Wittwer occasionally lards his interjections with rock idioms — he's far more exciting throwing out shards of treated sound than bending strings. There's a post-Last Exit tinge to the music at times, and Wertmüller apparently had *Machine Gun* in mind as an inspiration, but the music really rides in its own hectic direction. This might be hardcore.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Simon Fisher Turner
Still Moving Light
CHERRY RED CDBRED153 CD

Still Moving Light is the most recent of Simon Fisher Turner's collaborations with Rosemary Butcher, a choreographer whose cerebral but minimal approach has brought the state of modern dance closer and closer to that of an art installation. *Still Moving Light* is thoroughly sympathetic to her project — a nebulous collection of atmospheres whose halting forward momentum is induced by occasional bouts of distant clattering and the sporadic incursion of disembodied human voices.

The nearest thing the record offers to a song is "Fragment 21". Its hesitant watercolour introspection links it with the various musics of Gavin Bryars, Robert Wyatt and Mark Hollis. A gently echoing one finger piano figure gradually strengthens into undemonstrative chords that carry the faintest jazzy hint of Bill Evans. Over 12 minutes the music slowly reaches out with childlike trembling fingers to explore its harmonic world, finding in the process an infinitely subtle pulse. Elsewhere, the music is perpetually evanescent, on the edge of being, caught between flight and effulgence.

Although the occasional snatches of close miked speech — complete with the sensual smack of tongue against palate — act as tactile reminders that *Still Moving Light* was written with physical expression in mind, most of the record is made up of slowly drifting, gaseous textures. Fisher Turner makes liberal use of atomised distortion, in featherlight skeins of sound and wayward bouts of tidal pressure, moving between these different densities with intuitive ease. The 16 minute closing track, "Pathway Of The Spine", is an understated epic — if that's the right word — of greyscale fluctuation.

However forbidding all this might seem, *Still Moving Light* is consistently involving, even shorn of the movement that should accompany it. When combined with Rosemary Butcher's choreography, you can't help feeling this music would be truly mesmerising.

CHRIS SHARP

Fourth World
Last Journey
MELT 2000 BW2122 CD

Airto
Revenge Of The Killer Bees
ELECTRIC MELT ELM8012 CD

Allegedly the last album from Airto Moreira and Flora Purim's group project, *Last Journey* sounds like something of a laboured voyage to me. Albums like its predecessor, *Encounters Of The Fourth World*, were genuinely exciting visions of a new fusion. There are echoes of it here, but you've got to listen hard for it. "Trip To The Fourth World", with its rickety yet unfathomably deep rhythms and wordless incantations, reaches way back in time, alchemising primal energy through digital programming. Balanced against that, however, too many tracks are little more than slick dinner jazz, rooted in traditional structures and featuring anodyne sax/piano interplay.

Airto's percussive skills are as sharp as ever. His duet with another Latin master, Giovanni Hidalgo, on "Snake Bite" is a whirl of wondrously subtle invention. Purim, on the other hand, sounds more earthbound than of yore, particularly on the opening "Within Your Mind". Perhaps time is finally catching up with these living legends. The heavy-handed sentimentality of the closer, "Silvia", suggests a road that has been travelled a little too far. This last journey has definitely reached its natural end.

Under the guidance of ex-Moody Boy Tony Thorpe, Airto's own *Killer Bees* gets handed over to a brace of remixers for some beat-led retooling. With beat science becoming ever more complex, its encounter with Moreira, perhaps the most rhythmic of the jazz giants, should produce a match made in heaven. It doesn't. Too many of the artists on duty work to type. The vibrant, bouncy drum 'n' bass of Endemic Void and Justice, the humid, phosphorescent delicacy of Circadian Rhythms, the urban House of Ashley Beedle: all excellent, but exactly what you'd expect. The final trio of tracks, however, really takes off. Jimpster forsakes his usual digital jazz funk for a fractured TripHop landscape, landmarked by wailing saxes and pendulous pianos. Amon Tobin turns "Chicken In The Mind" into 21st century bebop, a whirl of piano and deep bass booms over cymbal-led breaks. And Max Brennan looks back, rather than forward, reducing "Nevermind" to a hushed Blue Note ambience of drums, bass and piano. Truth be told, there's little of Airto in any of them, but at least these last three seem as interested in re-routing their own music as his.

PETER McINTYRE

Malcolm Goldstein
The Seasons: Vermont
XI RECORDINGS 120 CD

Malcolm Goldstein & Peter Niklas Wilson
Monsun
TRUE MUZE TUMU9801 CD

Violinist Malcolm Goldstein is a doyen of the American avant garde. He was co-founder, with James Tenney and Philip Corner, of the legendary Tone Roads Ensemble, and his reputation as an uncompromising musician has encouraged John Cage and Ornette Coleman, among others, to write for him. His own compositions have not been well documented, but a substantially edited version of *The Seasons: Vermont*, for magnetic tape collage and instrumental ensemble, came out as a Folkways LP in 1983. This is the premiere release of its full, hour long version.

The Seasons: Vermont belongs to a series dating back to the mid-1960s, which Goldstein calls "soundings". As on his earlier solo outings, *Sounding The New Violin* (1991) and *Goldstein Plays Goldstein* (1994), the piece displays his alertness to the tactile dimension of playing, and his concern for the performance aspect of mobility. Bassist Robert Black and reedist Joseph Celli respond to scores which configure human actions with recorded sounds, evoking a Vermont environment as it changes through the year. The musicians are instructed to avoid facile imitation, and aim instead to emulate the natural world's "richness of possibilities and variety of nuances". This necessitates a wide range of extended performance techniques. The resultant sound environment sits in geographical proximity to John Cage's *Silence*, Charles Ives's *Essays Before A Sonata* and the writings of Henry David Thoreau, to whom the CD's closing ten minute solo violin improvisation is dedicated.

Goldstein's first release on True Muze documents a 1996 concert in Hamburg, featuring himself on violin in a duo with Peter Niklas Wilson, double bassist in the improvising collective, TonArt. Working alongside Goldstein is a daunting challenge. It requires an expansiveness that will nevertheless respect the integrity of the leader's singleminded approach to performing. Wilson, in duets, and in his own solo contributions, is suitably discreet, and while he consequently appears a lesser partner, he successfully avoids manoeuvres that might compromise Goldstein's idiosyncratic creativity.

JULIAN COWLEY

Peter Hammill
Typical
FIE! 9119 2XCD

The live double – it's not what it used to be. These days it's much longer. This set would run across at least three discs if it was on vinyl. Maybe it's even longer than *Yessongs*. Peter Hammill has earned his biblical duration, I suppose, since he's been at it for so long. One thinks of Hammill as prolific, but he's simply been a consistent worker. And this is something he hasn't even done before: the all solo live album. 19 songs from the files, culled from performances on a 1992 European tour. It's not that hard to get a decent live mix on voice, piano and guitar, but Paul Ridout's efforts pay off in something that sounds live yet still stands up in the living room.

If you want it to, Hammill is the sort of artist whose records people accumulate without really staying especially faithful to any of them. I haven't gone back and checked these versions against any of their studio incarnations – that wou dn't be the point, would it? – but where memory does serve, these treatments neither sound better nor, really, that much different. This is Hammill exposed, solitary — just like most of his studio confections. Perhaps it goes with this musing on the human condition. What you hear is mostly what's missing: the combed precision of the studio records, traded for intensity and in-the-raw. Yet when has Peter not been raw, as civilised and urbane as he is?

Sometimes he reminds me of Ben Webster, who also had two voices: pure and charming when quiet, gnarled and snarling when aroused. As with Ben, I prefer the reflective state, mainly because Hammill's scream mode can get a bit tattery along the way. It's impossible to be frightened by anything in rock any more, so the longform cruelties of songs like "Patient" and "Traintime" can often seem more petulant than nightmarish. The worst thing I noticed was how indifferent Peter's piano playing often is. I know it's only meant to be functional, but sometimes those minor sequences and crabby sonatinas could use a little more finesse.

He remains a great and unique presence, of course, and in a way such a singleminded record merely shores up his singularity. One for his most absolute faithful.

RICHARD COOK

Hession/Wilkinson/Fell & Morris
Registered Firm
INCUS 33 CD

I'm not sure what it is about Leeds, how it shapes up against the exotic, laidback charm of New Orleans, the hectic, cosmopolitan magic of New York, etc, but it has been generating first rate Improv for many years now, even if the scene isn't quite as healthy as the quality of records by alumni of the Termite Club might suggest.

Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band
Grow Fins: Rarities (1965-1982)
REVENANT REV210 5XCD

Although it was their third album release, Captain Beefheart And The Magic Band only really *arrived* with 1969's sprawling *Trout Mask Replica*. The ability to appreciate its seemingly random and all but impenetrable double LP length seemed beyond the ken of all but the most hardcore weirdos. Those who were able to decode *Trout Mask* felt like they had passed a gruelling test, after which few of them could resist the call to become missionaries of the Beefheart cause. The prevailing notion was that Don Vliet, as his mother knew him, had descended to earth from a planet very near Sun Ra's, and that the music he and his group produced — a kind of stinging, avant-Martian blues — was the result of a singular union of musicianship and artistic vision. For all the truth of that statement, it didn't tell the whole story. The exquisite *Grow Fins* set and its accompanying booklet notes by John French, together with Bill Harkleroad's *Lunar Notes* memoir, present a new take on Beefheart's Magic Band. If this version is radically at odds with that of the doctrinaire fanboys, it is no less amazing or compelling.

Grow Fins traces the development of The Magic Band's form-destroyer tendencies, from their protean psychedelic garage blues roots to *Trout Mask*'s mastery of unknown tongues and beyond. The set's main emphasis is on 1965-69, but few of the group's remarkable turns are left unnoted. The first disc, *Just Got Back From The City*, presents some of the group's earliest recordings. These sides occupy the same archaeological strata as their A&M singles. By all accounts, the direction of this early unit was determined democratically. Don's interest in the blues, and his comrades' take on R&B, were cemented with odd Stonesian paste. Acolytes will be blown away by the demos that guitarist Doug Moon has dusted off here. Others will probably be surprised by how 'inside' the tradition they are. Rounded out by live blues choogle from the Avalon Ballroom and a too-speedy demo session for *Safe As Milk*, the first disc demonstrates a group whose potential was somewhat muted by the fact that they were operating in the psych era's space/time continuum.

The second disc, *Electricity*, is a wild, transitional work. Guitarist Jeff 'Antennae Jimmy Semens' Cotton replaces Ry Cooder (who had replaced Doug Moon) and John 'Drumbo' French is introduced as the group's new drummer. With *Safe As Milk* and the first version of *Strictly Personal* already recorded, and following the departure of two original members, Don had become far more central to the music's direction. The bulk of *Electricity* was recorded during The Magic Band's first two trips to Europe. In early 1968 they went on a promotional junket, which included a legendary concert on the beach at Cannes's MIDEM convention (you can see it on video on the enhanced CD). Using equipment borrowed from Blossom Toes, the group's sound here has a beautiful limberness that beams the way toward things to come. Other tracks were recorded in Kidderminster, on the second 68 tour they undertook immediately after *Strictly Personal* proper was finished. Cotton and French had used their session fees to buy Vliet a soprano sax and he whips it out *hard*. Regardless of whether he knew what he was doing, his lung capacity was so massive that his extended reed discharges add an insane flavour to the proceedings. Among the rambling desert blues improvisations, his keening-goat hornwork is as striking as the sweet bellow of his voice and harmonica. Zappa's contention that the group's music was a collision between free jazz and Delta blues was never truer than here.

The next two discs, both called *Trout Mask House Sessions*, have most to reveal to those steeped in Beefheartian lore. By this juncture Bill 'Zoot Horn Rollo' Harkleroad and Mark 'Rockette Morton' Boston had arrived. Isolated in a house in Woodland Hills, this new Magic Band attempted to give shape and colour to the abstractly three-dimensional piano improvisations that Vliet whacked out in short spurts. The rehearsal tapes and the accompanying notes suggest that *Trout Mask* was not exactly the headbirth some have claimed for it.

By the time the album's basic tracks had been laid down at Whitney Studio, in a single four and a half hour gush, the material had been learned, re-learned and tinkered with to an incredible degree. Bathing the process of *Trout Mask* in new X-ray light, the music and chatter captured on these CDs actually make the results appear even more monumental. To think that these fractured miniatures of almost tortuous complexity could evolve into the holistic otherness of *Trout Mask* buggers belief. But here's the proof. Actual human beings spent months of agonised labour to create its pocket universe — a jagged landscape of alternating hilarity and aridity that operates entirely by its own logic. Hats off to 'em all.

The final disc, *Grow Fins*, is a miscellany recorded in *Trout Mask*'s wake. There's a track from the 1969 Actuel Festival (with Zappa on guitar), two tunes by the superb *Lick My Decals Off* group rescued from Detroit's *Tubeworks* TV show (also on the enhanced CD), and various assorted dribbles. Some of it is incredibly instructive (like the piano and guitar work tapes for "Evening Bell"); some of it is just incredible.

Even though he has been retired from music for more than 15 years, during which absence he has been accused by former associates of the foullest power trips, Captain Beefheart's music remains its own cutting edge. Together with The Magic Band he created a music so powerful and unique that it has expanded subterranean horizons in ways that we have yet to discover. *Grow Fins* is a splendid log of the journey.

BYRON COLEY

PHOTO STEVE MORLEY/REDFERNS

Various Artists
The Raga Guide
NIMBUS RECORDS NI5536/9 4XCD + BOOK

After writing a rave review for *The Times* of a concert given by Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma some years ago, I was given a ticking off by the Indian promoter. Being attacked for good reviews is familiar enough to be water off a duck's back, but for once, I felt the criticism was fair. I had omitted to give the names of the ragas played, which is a bit like reviewing Beethoven's *Ninth* and forgetting to mention which symphony you're talking about.

My excuse, apart from the usual whinge about turning around 350 word overnight crits for a mainstream newspaper, was ignorance coupled with a startling lack of published information. Despite the systemic complexity and long history of Hindustani music, most available books on the subject have been atrocious: unreliable, badly organised and absurdly incomplete. Without going to the feet of a master and undertaking a serious long term study of the art and science of the raga — the systematised tonal frameworks that give specific character and colour to improvisations — there is no way of properly evaluating an Indian musician's interpretation of any chosen raga except by the most generalised aesthetic judgements.

The Raga Guide attempts to address this issue by recording performances of 74 ragas, packaged on four discs within a book that gives transcripts, a short description, historical background and a collection of 17th century Mughal paintings that illustrate the symbolic content of many of the ragas included. The project was developed at Rotterdam Conservatory of Music, where Dilip Chandra Vedi was persuaded to summarise a core selection of ragas. Chandra Vedi, who died in 1992, was initially sceptical about the feasibility of summarising a raga without doing violence to its profundity.

As a listener who has enjoyed Hindustani music for decades without ever exploring its theoretical depths in any detail, *The Raga Guide* is a boon. To be frankly cynical, at last I can sound slightly more convincing when I write about Indian classical music and musicians. But far more than being a blagger's guide, the project is artfully conceived and beautifully produced: as well as its purpose as a serious academic survey, it could function as an introduction to Hindustani music or simply a collection of excellent recordings. Arranged alphabetically, each raga is played by a different performer, either flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia, sarod player Buddhadev DasGupta or one of two singers, Shruti Sadolikar-Katkar or Vidyadhar Vyas.

The material is ordered with so much clarity that I find myself drawn into various games: choosing to listen to a raga because its corresponding painting depicts a striking or puzzling scene, or reading a verbal description because of some unusual feature of the music. The painting illustrating the pre-sunrise raga *Lalit*, for example, shows a man walking away from a woman who is lying on a bed. Pretty obvious what has transpired here, one might think, though according to the notes, "most musicians regard *Lalit* as a serene raga with a devotional mood", which is exactly how Hariprasad Chaurasia plays it. The raga that follows, *Madhuvanti*, sung by Shruti Sadolikar Katkar, sounds somehow odd; it turns out to be a modern raga, probably from the early 1920s, a song about the Hindu holy festival when people squirt coloured powder and water over each other, which "does not fit into any of the common scale types".

Asavari, a late morning raga, is depicted as a female snake charmer holding a cobra and staring into its eyes: "On the summit of the sandalwood mount, robed in the peacock's plumes, and with a splendid necklace strung with pearls and ivory, the variegated one draws the serpent to herself from the sandalwood tree. This proud one wears it as a bracelet, [her body] ablaze with dark splendour." Hariprasad Chaurasia plays with a mesmeric, quietly sustained feel, his flute dancing in bright optimism tinged with sadness. This complexity of mood, a fluctuation of emotional subtleties and psychological implication, is the great fascination of the raga system, whereby relationships of pitches can suggest an entire range of human experience.

Although *The Raga Guide* can only scratch the surface of this vast subject, the pointers it offers are invaluable to an enriched appreciation of Indian music. Each piece may be brief, both in performance and description, but the opportunity to compare the essential nature of so many different ragas and learn at least some of their background outweighs the frustration of wanting to hear more.

DAVID TOOP

For this recording made at the Blizzard Condition in June 1996, Alan Wilkinson (reeds), Joe Morris (guitar), Simon H Fell (bass) and Paul Hession (drums) escape from Bruce's Fingers to Derek Bailey's Incus imprint. As is customary, there are no explanatory notes telling me what the music is about, and no press release telling me what to think of it. What is a poor reviewer to do? Is there anything to be deduced from titles like "You Do Mean Groucho Marx, Don't You", "The Delius Myth" or "If I've Offended Anyone, I Apologise"? Even the album title is ambiguous, given the cover design — may be reduced to writing about the music.

Wilkinson/Hession/Fell — m familiar with from such superb albums as *Foom! Foom!* (Bruce's Fingers) and *The Horrors Of Darmstadt* (Shock). I've heard less of Bostonian Joe Morris, but I'd happily hear more: he is an extremely useful supplement to the fearsome trio, and his style is earthed to a number of worthy contacts, including Derek Bailey himself. His babbling, short-stopped, vinegary guitar, dextrously creating contrapuntal effects, threads through the established interplay of the other three, thickening the weave or throwing shards of brightness into densely textured corners.

The tracks range from brief outbursts like "Groucho" and the title track to extended, cartwheeling jazz workouts like "Bows And Buttons", where Fell and Hession bowl along like a clump of tensile steel tumbleweed, drawing more tender species in its wake or bouncing impudently over obstacles. Throughout, Fell is powerfully rhythmic, yet takes good care of the harmonic grounding as the others swirl round him like gimlet-eyed mariners round the vortex of some cosmic plughole. "Spacesh ps Are Crap" is a more reflective, abstract piece explor ng sharp, shrill sounds, Wilkinson pecking the reed and making the tubing twang and ping, while Morris p inks at the nether extreme of the fingerboard. Altogether splendid stuff.

BARRY WITHERDEN

Ryoji Ikeda
Mort Aux Vaches
MORT AUX VACHES/STAALPLAAT NO NUMBER CD

Ryoji Ikeda brought the extremes of the aud tory range into MIDI-marshalled listenability on +/-, his most satisfying statement yet. Peeps, throbs, reverb, sequenc ng and panning: his tools were simp e but the music he produced stubbornly compell ng. In places the pieces, work.ng from the same repetitive, incremental pr nciples as Techno, evolved warped dance-influenced basslines. Elsewhere there was immense austerity — loving examinations of the root elements of electronic sound.

This Mort Aux Vaches release conta ns p eces recorded a year ago for Dutch radio station VPRO. The music is so precisely conceived that it loses litt e in the transfer to radio session. Of the two tracks in this lim ted edition of 1000, the first segues "Headphonics" and a few m nutes of "+/-" into a 20 minute piece. L sten ng again to the rearranged work, its density is more to the fore, the leve of incident more apparent. The same basic components happen slightly d fferently, but as t s music of great sparseness to begin with, the alterations have greater weight. The second piece, "LSDS" (not on +/-) is n similar vein: sine beeps out of phase, s owly multiply ng, u tra high-p tched whistling moving gradua ly forward until hiss ng hi hat substitutes and insistent bass tones emerge. Underpinned by one cont nuous pu se, it reaches an almost parodic climax with a rising, distorted sound which suddenly collapses into a single held tone.

The subtlety of his sound is preserved, but

PHOTO MICHELE TURRIANI

most of the work, dependent on highs and lows, sounds completely unsuitable for conventional radio transmission. Owners of +/- might feel it's more of the same, only slightly different. But in bringing such detailed music again under the microscope, this limited edition amounts to a seductive continuation of a beautiful and purified strand in Ikeda's output.
WILL MONTGOMERY

ISO
ISO
ALCOHOL ALISO CD

ISO
Live
ZERO GRAVITY ZGV023 CD

ISO
Gravity Clock
AMOEBIC AMOISO01 CD

After Ground Zero ended, turntablist Otomo Yoshihide founded a new trio ISO with his longtime collaborator Sachiko Matsubara, who plays sampler with sinewaves, and percussionist Ichiraku Yoshimitsu, who runs miscellaneous electronics. They've ended up with a thoughtful and deeply weird use of the group format, inside which a high level of instrumental interplay is achieved without any of them playing anything like a conventional instrument.

Generally speaking, pitch and rhythm are mostly incidental to their music, which deals solely with timbre. Of course, without the usual collateral signifiers, timbre takes a while to establish itself. So ISO's sounds acquire definition very gradually against a backdrop that resembles a cross section of a two-dimensional fencing match. Sachiko's sine samples produce a pure sound which can be deeply irritating when heard unaccompanied — her solo CD *Sine Wave Solo* (Amoebic) operates at the highest intersection of elegant and tortuous noise. In the context of ISO, though, her sustained buzzes are the equivalent of a rhythm section: the fixed mark against which the other two measure what they're doing. Otomo, in turn, restrains himself foregoing his turntables' usual hyperactivity in favour of small chirruping sounds and flashes of unidentifiable ceramic noises. (The one real burst of Otomo-ism as we know it comes halfway through *Gravity Clock*, when he unexpectedly introduces a majestic swell of John Williams strings.)

The deepest and most mysterious of their three discs to date is the self-titled album, recorded in London by Xentos (aka J. Voag of The Homosexuals), who brings all the feasting insect noises front and centre. It moves with disorienting slowness, sinewaves fluttering like strobe lights, while Ichiraku complements them with electronic tones that move along parallel tracks, then switch direction or disintegrate. The fourth piece is especially unnerving, a pitched three-way battle of short-circuiting electrical connections, whiffs and grinds, which few sounds survive.

Where *ISO* is prickly and oblique, *Gravity Clock* is austere, clean and more or less purposeful. Mixed and edited by Otomo, the disc also features the guest appearance of Masuko Tatsuki, who provides a simple beat in the second half of the 20 minute opener. There are some lovely moments elsewhere on the disc, where textures that have been circling each other nervously suddenly seem to be choreographed, like a field of blasted wheat resolving itself into a crop circle. On the second piece, something like a melody even develops for a while, though by the end it's been obliterated by a shuffling sampler tic.

The live disc is the least together and engaging of the three. Recorded over three performances in 1998, ISO busties about messily and pointlessly for too long, until they give up the ghost and throw everything they can find into the mix. Yet Ichiraku and Otomo seem overcome by the sinewaves' simplicity, whose signals cause them to lose direction. The results are still joltingly original, but the album doesn't have the slow grandeur of the two studio sets.
DOUGLAS WOLK

Kreidler
Mort Aux Vaches
MORT AUX VACHES/STAALPLAAT NO NUMBER CD

Ever had the feeling that too many CDs were being released? Here are ten tracks recorded by the much-praised Dusseldorf outfit Kreidler for Dutch station VPRO Radio in late 1997. Two of the pieces appear in more developed form on their *Weekend* album and three on *Appearance And The Park*, one of the most quietly effective pieces of music to appear last year.

Like forebears Can, their music is a triumph of absorbed influence — Kreidler succeed in interleaving diverse sounds into remarkably undemonstrative structures. Studio techniques on *Appearance And The Park* were not foregrounded to anything like the same degree as on Tortoise's *TNT*, but part of the music's appeal lay in the well calculated sound (the album was recorded at the Mouse On Mars studio in Dusseldorf).

This Mort Aux Vaches release is a dowdy affair by comparison, with many of the songs sounding like demos. "Good Morning City" comes across tidily but otherwise a flatness pervades the CD. Melody in Kreidler rests heavily on the basslines, which are under-served in these sessions. And that finely executed percussion, whether electronic or no, suffers too. This isn't to say that their music can only flourish in rarefied studio space, but it can certainly be damaged by inattentive recording. Of the hard-to-get or unissued pieces, "Automatic Tunnel" and the closing "A Painting" work best, but again they sound unfinished. Most are fascinating sketches, riffs and sounds that hang together but go nowhere. An adjunct to the main work, it falls a long way short of the superb minimal remixes on the early *Resport* mini-album.

The edition is limited to 1000, which should cover devotees.
WILL MONTGOMERY

Labradford
E Luxo So
BLAST FIRST ABFFP157 CD

In the delicate, translucent world of Labradford, to label something is to destroy it. Here things don't have names, they just exist. Though such an attitude hardly endears them to the world's radio jocks, their resourceful driftmusics warrant greater exposure. If credit-worthy titles like "with John Morand and assisted by Brian Hoffa" and "Recorded and mixed at Sound of Music, Richmond, Va" (the idiosyncratic leaps between cases are theirs) are hardly geared to winning them new media friends, they somehow set the tone of a group who specialise in American small-town exotica drained of tropic colour, like a Hawaiian shirt that has seen too many washcycles. Their music consists of forlorn Ambient loops, samples and restrained guitar reverb.

Masters at conveying desolation and solitude, their work is meditative yet somehow debilitating, what with their spartan pianowork and restrained string sweeps echo-fading into muggy silences. A couple of the samples are mildly distracting — the slamming of heavy doors and what sounds like a milk float being driven away — but they don't break the overall mood.

In places, Labradford invoke the spirit of Ennio Morricone's early work, elsewhere they're as chilling as Rachels' finer chamber works. But their best trick is to constantly threaten a crescendo that is destined to always stay out of earshot, thereby leaving the listener's imagination to do its worst. The *Twin Peaks* ambience of "by Chris Johnston" is acquired through the juxtaposition of stridulent crickets and a gentle organ loop. The Lynchian feel is sustained in the psychedelic tint of "Leta O Steen", which eventually gives way to some dulcimer-driven incidental music from an unnamed TV detective show. Perhaps the album's swoon factor is reduced by the complete absence of Mark Nelson's frail vocals. Even so, their melancholy is enormously seductive.
VELIMIR PAVLE ILIC

György Ligeti
Le Grand Macabre
SONY S2K62312 2XCD

For those few of us who care about contemporary opera, it's frustrating that so many works that apparently succeed abroad never get seen or heard in the UK, but Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* has done well in that respect. Premiered in Stockholm in 1978, it was staged at English National Opera in 1982, and in a broadcast concert performance at the Royal Festival Hall in 1989. Finally, Elgar Howarth conducted a

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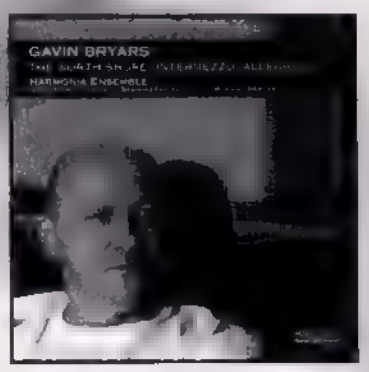

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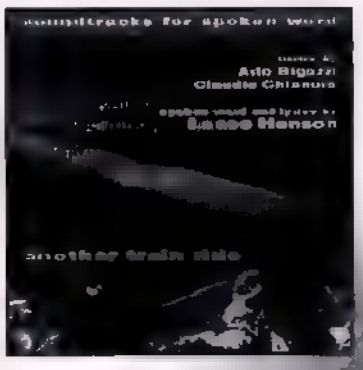

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Paul Schütze

Paul Schütze
Third Site
ATKODISC RCD10464 CD

Paul Schütze's soundworld is undergoing something of a polarisation. On the one hand, work with Bill Laswell, Toshinori Kondo and Raoul Björkenheim in Phantom City has established a Marvel hero line-up for further exposing the density of the planet with melting electronic jazz lillbient fusions. On the other hand, his series of Site works is galvanising a more abstract kind of music. The CDs come graced with mysterious photographs of real architectural sites along with their map coordinates — 46 37' 00" N 9 12' 00" E — while the music provides the setting for a lyrical spoken commentary on the structure in question.

Second Site explored a concrete calendrical park near Jaipur in India. *Third Site* continues the fusion of elemental and rational, focusing on the mirroring waters locked in the high-tech thermal bath complex designed by architect Peter Zumthor in the Swiss alpine village of Vals.

If Wim Wenders had been a property dealer he might have come up with a project like this. In an unhurried baritone voice sometimes doubled and desynchronised or otherwise distorted, Thomas Köner intones (in German) sparse descriptions of corridors, light planes, concrete cells and cylinders in a seductive murmur.

Welling and dissolving around the voice is a constant oceanic electroacoustic ambience through which flit sudden bright lights and burrs of sound — a Ry Cooderish twang on guitar (Raoul Björkenheim and Simon Hopkins); Clive Bell on shakuhachi and pi saw flutes; and Schütze himself adding gongs, vibraphones and a light rustling of percussion. Like a large sheet of metal taking on delicately welling nuances of light and tone, the music's languid suspension recalls the opening of an Indian raga, AMM or a placid Debussy. The soft hues of gamelan and South East Asian temple musics, perhaps a residue of Schütze's own drifting from Australia to London, are still very much evident in his work. However, like the Javanese ensemble which Debussy heard among the glass and iron structures of the Paris Expo of 1889, in this context they lose their native definition and take on a disembodied sheen. The muted touches of vibraphone likewise are the ghost of a jazz whose rhythms have been absorbed into one slow undulating swell.

What strikes me most is how far this site, and its predecessor, have drifted from those other mythical sites — the *New Maps Of Hell* or *Site Anubis*, with their demonic congestion of voices and rhythms. Some of Schütze's past music has managed to straddle that elusive threshold between a muscular fusion of global rhythms and sounds, and a more detached, almost cinematic approach to producing sound atmospheres; but here it's as if all its potential fret and movement has been sucked out and displaced onto the idealised proportions of the architecture.

The music has purposefully made a pact with the place, then, but I find myself distrusting the place, or what the place has done to the music. Of course, the thermal baths are themselves a place for healing and cleansing, but does this make them an adequate focus for what is, in effect, a meditative temple music? There's something about the totality of the reach for purity and impregnability here — *"All the internal walls are immensely thick"* — that makes me think that, in this context at least, Schütze's aesthetic of drift and exploration has become somewhat neutered and intransitive. If the music is calm it is forgetfully calm, the voodoo expelled beyond million dollar concrete slabs and a construction which, for all its glazed symmetries, looks like the highly polished entry to a Swiss bank vault. I'm not trying to suggest that Schütze should stick to making maps of hell, but I guess the bunkers of perfection bring their own demons with them.

MATT FFYTCHE

1991 Wergo CD recording

Now here it is again, in a recording of a Paris production, which comes to Covent Garden next season. For an opera that took over a decade to write (and that here appears in Ligeti's considerably altered 1997 version), that's a good deal of exposure, but *Le Grand Macabre* earns it, not least for its raw energy. That's apparent in the very opening moments, a wonderfully raucous fanfare for car horns which sets the mood for a piece that is scatological and eschatological in equal measure.

The opera takes us to Breughelland, where scoundrels, scallywags and lechers rule. Somewhere we can all recognise, then, but in the opera it's 'Jarry-fyed', to use the word Ligeti coined when telling his co-librettist, Michael Meschke, what he wanted for his adaptation of Michel De Ghelderode's 1930s absurdist farce, *La Balade Du Grand Macabre*. The figure who gives the opera its title is Nekrotzar, a diabolus ex machina who threatens to destroy the world but isn't quite sure whether, by the end of the opera, he has managed it. A final passacaglia sardonically advises us, *"Neath terrors dire let others bow/for us there's only here and now"*.

The vocal style is parodistic, an all-out assault on the operatic idiom from screaming countertenors to ethereal sopranos and groaning basses. It's all bracing good fun but, like knockabout comedy, has the unmistakable whiff of the 1960s about it. Perhaps then, when Ligeti received the original commission, there was mileage to be got out of parodying opera house excesses, but in the 1990s, contemporary opera has dug itself into such a deep hole that I can't help feel something else is needed, a way of writing for voices that retains the precision demanded by opera, yet finds new modes of expression that are both narrative (however defined) and emotive (ditto).

Well, it's always possible to criticise someone for what they didn't write rather than what they did, but it's undeniable that *Le Grand Macabre* is hyperactively inventive, not least in Ligeti's handling of the orchestra. The opera is sung in Geoffrey Skelton's skilful English translation, and Esa-Pekka Salonen conducts an orchestra (The Philharmonia) and cast who give it everything. Live recording leaves a few rough edges but here, if anything, they enhance rather than hinder enjoyment. Ligeti's only opera has been called "the key opera of the end of the 20th century". I'm not convinced it is that, but it is often beautiful and frequently funny. Even if the audience on this recording could hardly be said to be convulsed with laughter, humour in contemporary opera is so rare that, for this attribute alone, Ligeti deserves thanks.

NICK KIMBERLEY

One World Ensemble
Breathing Together
FREEDOM JAZZ FFJ001 CD

William Blake loved to walk among the fires of hell. He delighted in "the enjoyments of Genius, which to Angels look like torment and insanity." A useful observation for those reporting back from Planet Free Jazz. Common sense says that noisy music is noisy and soothing music is soothing, but common sense is wrong. No less than serialism, free jazz overturns value systems and social assumptions, and finds beauty in glancing discord and rhythmic mismatch. Something tight and limited and private breaks in the soul when you let this music in: you see how wonderful life could be if we weren't forever colouring in schemas dictated by petty-minded accountants.

Of course, statements of freedom (or art, as we call it) quickly become commodities themselves. Regardless of genre, there isn't a release today that doesn't promise freedom from something or other. At a price. However, One World Ensemble's freedom is not partial or parochial. They've absorbed Coltrane's intensive study of global scales and modes. They burst the frame of the Western tonal system (that rinkydink, safe soundworld embedded in every keyboard sampler). Avant rockers may apply weird and irksome sonorities to their pop songs, but if they can't warp and relativise *every* parameter, we're stuck with *Tubular Bells*. One World Ensemble, on the other hand, hold the key to the Einsteinian universe.

The players have histories. Daniel Carter has played sax and trumpet with the Colbourne/Flaherty noiseniks, Sabir Mateen busks on sax daily in the New York subway, bassist Wilber Morris was a founder member of the David Murray Octet, Susie Ibarra drummed in the David S Ware Quartet and has recorded with Derek Bailey. Yuko Fujiyama frees the piano from its moorings and lets runs trickle over her colleagues' sounds like water over rocks. Individual contributions are hard to assess because everyone keeps a total music moving and evolving. They begin sparse and gentle, there's a blues and a groove and a climactic shriek apocalypse, but you are left with a chord

ringing in your ears that's serene and benign.

This is free improvisation by musicians whose resources are extraordinarily rich and diverse, steeped in black music's vocalised playing. Each instrumental contribution takes the music out, but everyone defers to the total sound. "Dances For Duke" fixes on a wobbling, interrupted groove, the magical exoticism Can craved but never quite achieved. There's not one note that doesn't matter or affect the whole. Purist audiophile recording of striking depth (cross stereo mics, plus one mic near the bass and two in the piano) renders the rounded sound picture required when ensemble collectivity is the point of the process.

BEN WATSON

Jochem Paap

Vrs-Mbnt-Pcs 95981

FAX PS08/94 CD

Rotterdam's Jochem Paap is more familiarly known — at least to Hardcore Techno audiences — as Speedy J, under which name he has recorded albums such as *Public Energy No 1* and *G Spot*. As Speedy J, Paap has established himself as a purveyor of the fast beat, employing a layered technique that was as much about an exploration of funk as it was Techno. This awkwardly titled album released under his own name is all the more interesting, then, for consisting of seven virtually beatless Ambient soundscapes, constructed in between his more club orientated projects from 1995-98.

Vrs-Mbnt-Pcs 95981 offers a tantalising glimpse of a DJ's private life and the music he produces outside his public profile. Brian Eno's *Music For Airports* is its implicit model, though the bell-like timbres of 'Spk' or the immense (and moving) slowness of 'Dtnd-Jn' recall the delicate constructions of the classic Eno/Cluster collaborations.

Not to be rushed, this music requires patient listening. Paap is laying bare the kind of gradual developments that are obscured on his Speedy J releases. Being Paap's electronic Ambient debut, in a limited edition of 2000, demand should be at a premium. Don't hesitate, then, if you want to hear it: this is wonderful sonic architecture, and insubstantiality is its major virtue.

LOUISE GRAY

Ivo Perelman

Brazilian Watercolour

LEO 266 CD

This latest in the stream of releases from Brazilian tenor saxophonist Ivo Perelman showcases two set-ups. Most of the material comes from a session with three percussionists: Rashied Ali, Cyro Baptista and Guilherme Franco. Interleaved with these tracks are five pieces from 1996 recorded with pianist Matthew Shipp (the rest of the same session can be found on a Cadence disc).

Brazilian music figures large for Perelman — he's recorded Brazilian folk and children's songs — but a larger figure for him is John Coltrane, whose searching late style is his starting point. It's fitting, then, that he should work once again with Rashied Ali, who appeared on the terrific *Sad Life* and who, of course, earlier accompanied Coltrane into a loose space of mobile rhythmic intensities. These sax and percussion tracks are less rhythmically successful than those experiments, however. They include a samba, a destructured "Desafinado" and a version of Ary Barroso's "Brazilian Watercolour" (usually known simply as "Brazil"). Perelman is in storming form on these pieces but is let down by the contending rhythmic impulses, which don't so much mimic the united strands of Brazilian and jazz music in Perelman's playing as run into a murky deadlock. The work with Shipp is more successful, as Perelman adapts himself to Shipp's lively, abstracted melodic and harmonic inputs. The lower temperature brings out a quirkier strain in the saxophonist. Shipp's dark, all-embracing chords and use of silence give Perelman plenty of points to hit off. The fundamental tension in the encounter is between the tenorist's wandering, voice-like salies and Shipp's precise, straight man side of the dialogue. Uneven overall, but a riot of sound nonetheless.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Steve Reich

Phase Patterns

WERGO WER6630 CD

Steve Reich

Reich. Remixed

NONESUCH 755979555 CD

Steve Reich

Music For 18 Musicians

RCA 09026686722 CD

Just when you thought it was safe to put on a Steve Reich record... A reminder of insistent 60s minimalism at its most unlistenable surfaces at the same time as a tribute by contemporary remixers. His music has been appropriated by such as The Aphex Twin, The Orb and Tortoise, but this is the first remix project that Reich has approved and been involved in directly.

Reich has had a massive influence on a gamut of musicians from different traditions, and the importance of his early systems music is undeniable. Pure minimalism is represented by the phase-shifting of *Piano Phase* (1966), the earliest piece on Wergo's compilation by the excellent Ensemble Avantgarde. The sleevenote offers a very strict interpretation when it argues that the slightly later *Phase Patterns* and *Four Organs* — both for four electronic organs — already suggest post-minimalism. Instead of unfolding a clear minimal process from beginning to end, they show breaks in motifs.

Though conceptually compelling, this is hard music simply to listen to. The people who did

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Jonathan Harvey
Tombeau De Messiaen
SARGASSO S28029 CD

The huge black bell of Winchester Cathedral bears a Latin inscription that translates as, "I count the fleeting hours, I lament the dead, I call the living to prayer". Together with his son Dominic's voice — then a Winchester chorister — it forms the sound material for Jonathan Harvey's best-known piece, *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco*. It gets another airing on this superb disc of Harvey's music that covers all periods and a range of media — solo piano, piano with tape, and electronic music both pure and musique concrète in inspiration.

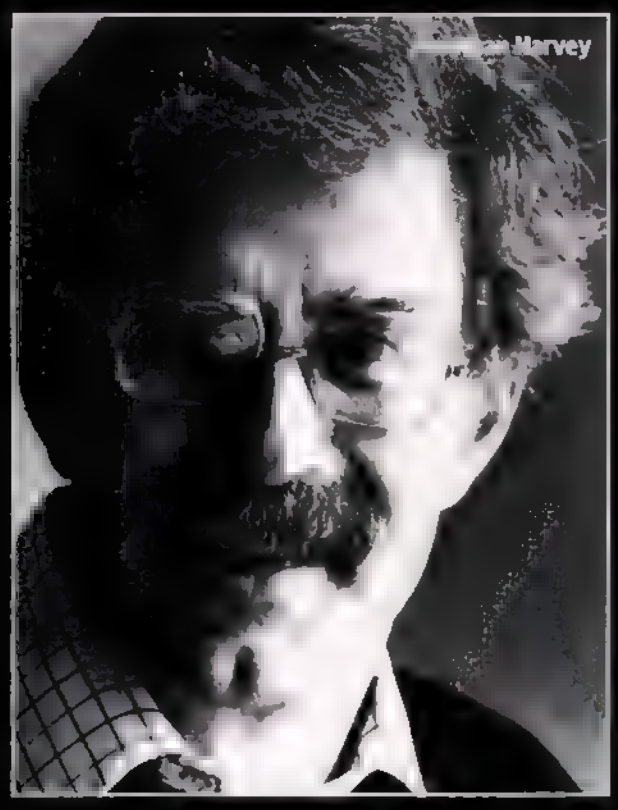
The British composer has written some of the most stunning electronic music since Stockhausen, with dazzling combinations of synthesized sounds and real-time orchestral forces. Born in 1939, he underwent a "Stockhausen conversion" in 1966. "Here was a man who was quite explicitly seeing in music the language of some greater consciousness," Harvey declared. The spiritual remains central to Harvey's musical output.

Mortuos Plango was realised at Boulez's IRCAM in 1980, where recorded sounds of bell and voice were crossbred with their synthetic simulations. Seamless transformation was the aim — for instance, from a sung vowel to a complex bell spectrum. Both *Mortuos Plango* and *Ritual Melodies* have been remixed for this release, which celebrates Harvey's 60th birthday. By the time of *Ritual Melodies* (1990), Harvey was more confident in rejecting recorded sounds entirely, relying on sounds generated artificially by computer. His collaborator Jan Vandenheede made simulations of Indian oboe, Vietnamese koto, Tibetan temple bell, shakuhachi, and Western and Tibetan chant. Aided by advances in programming, all his elements seamlessly synthesize, one into another. Again bell tones are prominent, symbolising the spiritual.

Like abstract painting, electronic music runs the risk that by abandoning instruments and voices with their traditional associations, it becomes a mere design or pattern of sounds. But Harvey's transformation of vocal and instrumental sources overcomes this dilemma, showing a remarkable and sensuous aural imagination. Harvey wrote, "In entering the rather intimidating world of the machine I was determined not to produce a dehumanised work if I could help it, and so I kept fairly closely to the world of the original sounds." This has been the guiding principle in his electronic works. Harvey says, "There's no magic in making new sounds. . . The magic is in the composer inviting people to expand their individuality into a new region."

Tombeau De Messiaen mixes piano and tape. It's the second recent piece with a title that references one of the most beautiful works of 20th century music: Ravel's *Le Tombeau De Couperin*, written as a lament for friends killed in the First World War. It's interesting to compare Harvey's tribute to the French composer with Michael Daugherty's *Tombeau De Liberace*. Daugherty, sadly, is an American airhead with a major label contract; Harvey continues to rely on small British labels such as Sargasso and NMC.

Harvey's *Tombeau*, for piano and tape, generates some glorious scrunching between the equal-



tempered piano and the Just Intonation of the tape part. It culminates in an exuberant Nancarrow-like conclusion of polyrhythmic madness. Avant garde virtuoso Philip Mead is the pianist on both this piece and *Four Images After Yeats*, which is for piano alone. The latter work is hardcore modernism that still shimmers and enchants. The last *Image* is longer than the first three put together, and moves into postmodern terrain by incorporating music by Bach, Mozart, Liszt, Schoenberg and others. The performances, like the music, are dazzling.

ANDY HAMILTON

listen in the 60s were usually taking something else at the time, but though many people find the music hypnotic that's not my experience. However, *Music For 18 Musicians* — for piano, percussion, voices and wind instruments — marks a glorious efflorescence. Composed between 1974 and 1976, it was the largest piece Reich had written up to that point, and its incorporation of harmonic complexity does show a decisive end to pure minimalism. Relatively frequent shifts from section to section are cued by a phrase on the metallophone — a method used by West African master drummers and in the Balinese gamelan, as Reich has remarked. But he acknowledges a stronger model in the work of 12th century church composer Perotin.

Because the piece had always been performed by Reich's own ensemble, he could get away with scoring the parts in a musical shorthand. Recently a PhD student was engaged to produce a full score — I guess these guys do have their uses — enabling Ensemble Modern's first non-Reichian performance and recording. The composer professes himself very pleased with the result, and the whole piece shimmers and ripples beautifully, a kaleidoscope of rainbow colours.

Music For 18 Musicians figures in *Reich Remixed*, which selects from the 10CD Nonesuch collection *Works 1965-95*. A recent radio interview suggested that Reich's involvement amounted to suggesting artists and approaches. Only *It's Gonna Rain*, *Come Out* and *Piano Phase* are represented from the 60s. Most respectful are D*Note's "Phased + Konfused Mix", which remains close to the *Piano Phase* original, and Coldcut's remix of *Music For 18 Musicians* "Steve Reich is my favourite living composer," says D*Note, while Coldcut claims *18 Musicians* is simply his favourite piece of music. The effect of their approach is to straighten out Reich's phase structures in a way that's very appealing and plangent.

DJ Spooky has had poor reviews recently in these pages and his showy and unfocused remix of *City Life* (1994) isn't about to break his duck. His pretentious description — "a music of repetition, time-like falling drops of amber in the setting sun . . . " — doesn't help. *The Desert Music* gets a more successful transformation by Freq Nasty, which is obliterated by expanding dance grooves, but it is totally coherent and convincing.

Is Reich really a precursor of today's electronic music? Ken Ishii argues that he's "the basis of what we do in music today", and many artists claim him as an influence, but I'm not convinced. Reich only explored tape composition as a basis for phase-shifting in his earliest works, before transferring his attention to live musicians. Placing a dance groove against Reich's phase structures inevitably breaks them up, but certainly there's some very strong counterpointing of them here. Not a dilution then, more like a development, and highly recommended.

ANDY HAMILTON

Ernst Reijseger with Tenore E Cuncordu De Orosei
Colla Voche
WINTER & WINTER 910037 CD

Some of the most stirring and emotional music of last year was found on the two recordings of Sardinian choirs from the Munich-based Winter & Winter label. Beautifully recorded in a remote cathedral, these small male voice groups dig deep into an unbroken medieval tradition. Their unhurried blocks of snarling vocal texture bristle with harmonics. The fierce bass drones recall Russian Orthodox singing, but this is a unique Mediterranean style that tingles the ears. Enter Dutch cellist Ernst Reijseger, often heard recently with The Clusone Trio performing a vigorous mix of improv and jazz standards. Reijseger also has a solo album on Winter & Winter, and apparently he spontaneously started playing along with the Sardinians the first time he met them. This album is the result of five nights spent in that same cathedral by Reijseger and the singers, plus Scottish percussionist Alan Purves.

Fortunately this is a long way from Jan Garbarek's dalliance with The Hilliard Ensemble, or sitarist Ustad Nishat Khan with Ensemble Gilles Binchois. For me these are rather sterile encounters in which neither side has much to say to the other. But Reijseger and the Sardinians are seriously on each other's case, and seem delighted to be so involved. Starting with Purves's eerie chorus of whirled tubes, the cello states chords, underpins the choir and extemporises at will — Reijseger even sings along with the cello line to add an extra voice. Singer Patrizio Mura gets out a harmonica for a furious traditional dance, and provides a jaws harp intro for a Reijseger composition. Purves's percussion is outstanding and always totally to the point, whether it's a single deep punctuation or a

flickering rhythm.

Cello and percussion widen the tonal range of the choir's sound, though maybe the emotional impact of their monolithic harmonies is inevitably more powerful when they are heard alone. The more secular pieces are particularly successful. "Su Puddhu" is wilder and more extrovert in this version, whipped on by Reijseger's cadenzas. The most extraordinary is "Naneddu Meu", in which the cello's fierce strumming leads the singers into a swing rhythm, a streetcorner doowop a cappella sounding at least one millennium old.

CLIVE BELL

Sam Rivers & Alex Von Schlippenbach

Tangens

FMP 99 CD

After he left Miles Davis in 1964, Sam Rivers developed a concept of his music as open ended and flowing: "a stream of consciousness — just talk, let your thoughts flow and let them sort themselves out." His solo saxophone CD *Portrait* (see *The Wire* 162) vindicated his approach, showing both lyricism and a firm grasp of structure.

Back in 1966, Alex Von Schlippenbach assembled some of Germany's best musicians to perform his explosive *Globe Unity* score: an academic background (he studied with Bernd Alois Zimmerman) is not necessarily a brake on invention, then. Indeed, it was a performance by his Globe Unity Orchestra in the late 70s that inspired the founding of the Leeds Termite Club and pushed Hession/Wilkinson/Feil towards total improvisation.

Hence an encounter between the sax of Rivers and the piano of Von Schlippenbach promises great things. Schlippenbach sets the stage with sparse notes that refuse the assurance of a home key, but aren't quite atonal either, recalling the folksy melancholy of Leos Janacek. Rivers joins him on flute, his skips and dives abetting the sylvan atmosphere. The pair are so well matched it's uncanny. Things toughen up when Rivers takes up soprano. Schlippenbach's mastery of harmony allows him to unleash Taylorist block chords in response to Rivers's profusion of scales. The duo boil up energy and then surrender to lyrical lostness and dying falls.

On the 30 minute "Tangens Beta", Rivers strains at some impossibly high notes, destabilising his fluency and pushing towards the kind of crisis necessary for a creative improvisation. However, Schlippenbach doesn't use the piano as a soundmaker independent from the tempered system it embodies (not impossible — see Cage and Monk, or Alex Maguire, or Matthew Shipp). His skill is obvious, but couching Rivers in classical legitimacy smothers anything dangerous, any spontaneous sparks. When Rivers lays out, Schlippenbach flounders in banalities, his chordal fills seemingly untouched by what has gone before.

In the absence of the physical compulsion of jazz or rock, the free improvisor's organising principle is the existential void of 'nothing to play'; if that black hole is missing, the musical orbit lacks point and tension. So *Tangens* becomes a chilled out luxury soundscape, full of quality, yet redundant, like contemplating acres of carpet in a department store when you're craving expressionist burn holes.

Peter Niklas Wilson claims this music "is not spectacular — no superficial pyrotechnics, no forced ecstasy — it demands patience and time of whoever wants to commit himself to its logic of gentle flow, of small turbulences, of sudden rapids." This art-as-nature romanticism — let's contemplate the riverine majesty — is surely FMP's annotator making the best of a bad job. *Tangens* is formal and sterile; the great encounter failed to ignite. People who want to hear what happens when jazz sax and classical piano really grapple should check out Anthony Braxton and Georg Graewe's astonishing *Duo (Amsterdam)*.

BEN WATSON

Shakti

Remember Shakti

VERVE 559945 2XCD

With interest renewed in John Mayer and Joe Harriott's Indo-Jazz explorations from three decades ago, it seems a suitable moment to recall John McLaughlin's fruitful encounters with Zakir Hussain, TH Vinkarayam and L Shankar during the mid-1970s. In the absence of violinist Shankar, recollection of Shakti is assisted by bansuri maestro Chaurasia, who augmented the trio with his bamboo flute for a series of UK concerts in 1997. These recordings were taken from those live performances, and capture their reflectiveness and unhurried virtuosity. Chaurasia, who came to the attention of Western listeners with *Call Of The Valley*, his epochal 1967 collaboration with santoor player Shiv Kumar Sharma, transcends the appellation 'special guest', and proves the ensemble's dominant voice.

In this company, that's a daunting measure of his accomplishment. He composed the opening 30 minute sequence, which features his eloquent bansuri alongside Hussain's tabla, with tanpura supplied by Uma Mehta. He also contributed the expansive and elegant hour-long composition which opens the second disc. All four members find ample room there to demonstrate their immense musical resourcefulness. An awesome dialogue emerges between Hussain and fellow percussionist Vinayakram. But the piece ultimately bears the flautist's stamp. McLaughlin's respectful constraint is a long way from the headlong charge of The Mahavishnu Orchestra, still further from the spaced out aggression of *Devotion* (1969), and his excoriating work with Lifetime. The palpable sincerity and disciplined discretion of his approach in this acoustic context descends rather from the introspective endeavour of *My Goal's Beyond* (1970). The trio he leads on "The Wish" attains seemingly telepathic levels of interaction between himself and the percussionists. On the concluding "Zakir", and McLaughlin's "Lotus Feet", the guitarist plays magnificently, but Chaurasia steals the show with his most sweetly appealing playing.

Fusion became a term of disparagement on account of certain facile exaggerations of prominent musical characteristics. It rapidly became synonymous with glib caricature. *Remember Shakti* makes no such pacts with fashionability; in these hands the concept has attained full maturity in practice.

JULIAN COWLEY

Matthew Shipp Duo

DNA

THIRSTY EAR 57067 CD

Since 1992, ecstatic jazz pianist Matthew Shipp has released an astounding 14 albums as a bandleader, and appeared on at least 20 others by such respected talents as David S Ware, Roscoe Mitchell, Ivo Perelman and Joe Morris. So when the boyish looking 38 year old announces he's taking a sabbatical from recording with this collaboration with bassist William Parker, it's certainly not out of laziness.

Shipp says he's completed his opus — the temple that he considers his body of work is now erect. If so, this final addition isn't the altar, but the large oak doors flung open wide to welcome new parishioners. Bookended with a pair of American folk music standards, *DNA* is Shipp's most accessible record.

His retreat begins with "Johnny Comes Marching Home". This Civil War battle cry is transformed from rebel yell to a meditative funeral march that ends sadly, mimicking the death of the song's soldier. The following "Cell Sequence" starts a slow rebirth with a quiet call and response between Shipp and Parker, and a lot of evocative silence. Parker continues the restrained energy for several minutes on "Genetic Alphabet", until Shipp eases in, and eventually explodes with his trademark percussive staccato chords.

After the duo get all hot and heavy on "Orbit" and "Mr Chromosome", Shipp relaxes with a solemn, straightforward cover of "Amazing Grace", which make it clear that the *DNA* of the title is meant to describe the collaborative process between these two improvisors.

DNA is like great sex. When everything fits into place, you don't notice the mechanics, you just enjoy the wild ride and revel in the intimacy. For the time being, though, you'll have to catch their live act, because intimate moments like these won't be captured on tape until Shipp's sabbatical is over.

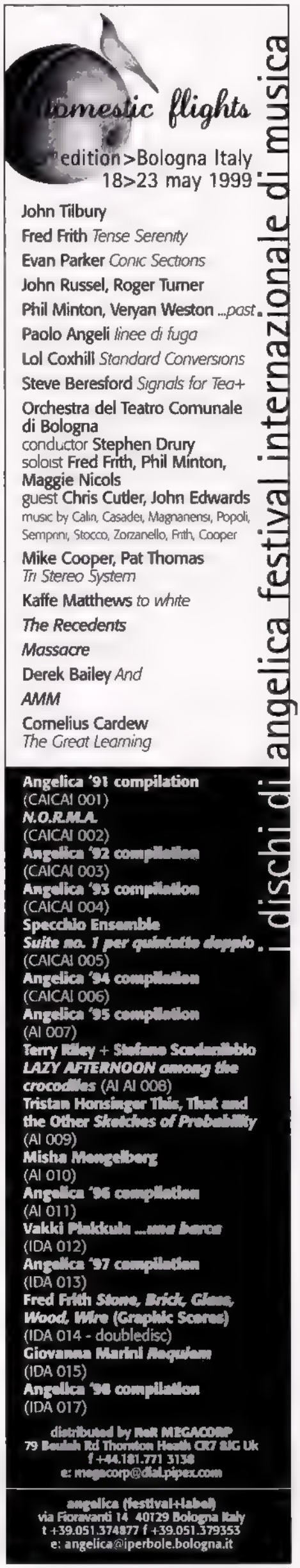
TOM ROE

Smadj

Equilibriste

MELT 2000 BW2126 CD

Efforts to blend dance beats with 'complementary' musics rarely works — check



Purple Trap

Decided. . . Already The Motionless Heart Of Tranquility, Tangling The Prayer Called "I"

TZADIK TZ7221 2XCD

In 1853, US Commodore Matthew Perry's iron ships forcibly opened up Japan to the outside world, ending 200 years of self-imposed isolation. In 1999 the Americans might regret his act. Purple Trap is the third document of guitarist Keiji Haino's recent American incursions — the others are Fushitsusha's live discs from San Francisco (1996) and Victoriaville, Canada (1997), on Charnel House and Victo respectively. Where the first two comprehensively laid waste the myth of US psychedelic supremacy, Purple Trap is a transgenerational Japanese-American collaboration bringing together Haino, on guitar and in extraordinarily good voice, with drummer Rashied Ali and bassist Bill Laswell.

But previous Tokyo-NYC summits haven't always lived up to their promise (cf Haino's encounters with Painkiller and other Zorn combinations). If Laswell has appeared on too many indifferent international records to raise expectations, one that also teams Haino with former John Coltrane drummer Ali is a tremendously exciting prospect; for Haino's music aspires to the same levels of intensity, ravaging physicality and spiritual transcendence as Coltrane's mid-60s LSD records, on which Ali drummed. And Purple Trap do indeed produce similar feats of intensity and endurance here, with Ali pacing, generating and fuelling their drive for ecstasy, while firing webshots of beats to cover the ground between Haino's static guitar drills and Laswell's predilection for rampaging where the buffalo roam.

Where Haino stays rooted to the spot, concentrating on working tight, black tone clusters until they have accumulated enough energy to expand and explode into a brilliant, blinding constellation of sound, Laswell's bass is a more belligerent presence, punching holes in the blackness to cause nighttime light pollutions that prevent you seeing stars. However, it's a tad too easy to heap the blame on Laswell for Purple Trap's shortcomings — surely Haino alone is to blame for his increasingly preposterous English title schemes (some are great, though: try "Ask A So-Called Sage Who Speaks Only Plausible Excuses The Meaning Of The Volition 'Further'. . .") For this is a trio project, not Haino plus hired hands, and the music arising out of it is both more and less than you might hope for from the individuals involved. As a Haino fan, it's a joy to hear him and Ali in particular, and less frequently with Laswell, tilting towards each other to explore some uncommon musical space. At the same time, inevitably, the most Haino-like tracks are most appealing, especially when these occasionally enhanced settings push him farther out there.

After the demon-expelling shriek with which Haino habitually clears the space opening a new set, the best of these discs explores a kind of Cocteau-like Orphic underworld familiar from Haino's desolate solo album *Affection*. In places the music moves across unhallowed ground where a weird interplay is enacted between Haino's enervated thrash and Laswell's hyperactive balling bass. At certain exhilarated points, the music fuses an elevated jazz rock from Ali's galloping drums, the guitarist's comping figures and Laswell's Weather Report audition parts. But it is most affecting on the tracks where the trio hauls itself through some harrowing soul music pitched somewhere out on the far side of Pluto. Coltrane and Haino fans alike know length isn't everything, but by the end you feel you've been taken on quite some trip.

BIBA KOPF

the Trance section in your local record store if you want proof. But this blend of breakbeat rhythms and traditional African instrumentation works a treat, perhaps because it's all created by the same person. Tunisian by birth, and raised in Paris from an early age, Jean Pierre Smadj was exposed in equal doses to the music of his homeland — where he became a talented oud player — and contemporary dance culture, hooking up with the Paris sound system, Tatoum. *Equilibriste*, his debut album, is his attempt to balance the two.

Smadj's skill lies in his recognition of the tension that exists between these two worlds and the excitement that it can generate. The title track's delicate instrumentation is almost overtaken by the rush of the programmed breaks, spurring them onto a strange, fragile velocity. In a similar way, the natural reverb of Smadj's oud and Sofi Hellborg's flute seem to ricochet off the basic beats of "Nous Sommes Infinis", creating a hall of mirrors effect that makes the track seem bigger than it is.

He's no less adept at fusing the two when he wants to. The crazy oud fretwork of "Vite Avide" snakes in and out of the Junglist beats, with a sixth sense of where the breaks fall. At the other end of the scale, in "Glogg", he uses the instrument to create an incredibly sexy ripple that rides the swells of the breaks in joyous unison.

A virtuoso in crafts both ancient and modern, Smadj ought to be careful. He could give fusion a good name.

PETER McINTYRE

Such

The Issue At Hand

MATCHLESS MRDCD38 2XCD

This is a kind of music I imagined when I was younger — music full of space, music which slows down time. Music performed without showing off or competition, a kind of egoless landscape, but completely acoustic and requiring great stamina and technique. Luckily, the way Such — a trio featuring shakuhachi player Yoshikazu Iwamoto, and AMM's percussionist Eddie Prévost and pianist John Tilbury — play this makes it even better than the music I was dreaming up. There's a place here for outbursts and surprise.

Morton Feldman was writing something of the sort 30 years ago. I tried my hand at it, but completely underestimated the compositional skill needed. In any case, composition was beginning to seem like the wrong route to reach this Eldorado. When Iwamoto fluttertongues the shakuhachi on a wavering, unstable pitch (during "Para, 3"), is there any point in writing that in a score? The point is surely that it's Iwamoto's immediate response to Eddie Prévost's hollow clunking on ambiguously tuned percussion. Percussion (or junk, maybe) that Prévost has selected himself, and is unique to him. The point is that Iwamoto is dealing with the issue at hand, as the album title has it. That each musician is taking responsibility for his own sound.

In fact, one of the 'tricks' is to worry only about your own playing, and not too much about the others. Just deal with the issue at hand. The single piece on this double CD is a mind-boggling 151 minutes, slightly edited down from a longer session last summer, recorded at the Gateway studio in Kingston-On-Thames. The strategy was simply to play continuously for three hours or so. Just knowing you have that much time affects how you play. Prévost and Tilbury are veterans of improvising trio AMM, and have been exploring this terrain for 30 years, though not always with this degree of delicacy and silence. Iwamoto has lived in Britain for 20 years, and has played shakuhachi for several contemporary composers.

Improvisation is not part of the Japanese tradition, but Iwamoto sounds at ease throughout. He uses an array of Japanese vibrato techniques, eerie trills and fabulous icy blasts of pure breath sound, sometimes mixing his voice into the note, often simply hovering on a single pitch. Iwamoto stays firmly Japanese, while Prévost and Tilbury by no means aim at an oriental effect, but by allowing themselves to be who they are, they produce music of great humanity and harmony, as Frank Denyer points out in a sleevenote essay. Apparently string quartet rehearsals have been filmed and shown to business people as models of collaborative endeavour. You feel there must be an important message hidden in the way these three musicians, without discussion or even a composer to take 95 per cent of the decisions for them, can evolve such a quietly powerful result.

Prévost allows himself some good prosaic thumps on wood and metal, unglamorous sounds which recall certain Japanese percussion. He also explores bowed sheet metal textures, and has a wine barrel strung up to sound like a double bass. His rapport with Iwamoto is extraordinary. Tilbury's piano is a heady mix of authority and sensuousness. At one point ("Para, 10") there's an exquisite ten minutes of completely solo piano, using chordal movement reminiscent of Howard Skempton's compositions (Tilbury recorded a Skempton album in 1996). The way the other two musicians sit back and let this solo develop is one more of the delights of this record.

CLIVE BELL

Damo Suzuki Band
PROMISE
NET-WORK DNW008014 7XCD

20 years ago I would have swooned at a prospect such as this — an unlimited edition of (albeit satellite) Cannibalism. For years we hopeful acolytes of Canonisation waited out distant rumours of leak and spill, tracking down scarce vinyl. Part of the mythos was a Salinger-like disjunction between the set number of available works versus rumours of stored ore. Since the CD revolution a few gems have come to light, but — well, whisper it who dares, there may even be a hint of a Can backlash underway. Not so much against the group themselves and their inviolate Work, but against what I would call the unfolding Warholisation of Can: the pointless recollection of every last part, particle and spray. After the ill-advised remix project, the tribute albums, the no-brainer biogs — what next? Can duvets? Screensavers? Recordings of them pouring milk onto their cereal? Why not? Archive madness doesn't seem to differentiate.

Archive projects (unearthed roots, forgotten folkways and mislaid nuggets) can be a can-hear enlightenment, but also a literal embarrassment of non-riches based on lamentable King Ludwig lapses of judgment. There seems to be a figurative something in the literal size, shape and anti-matter of CDs which seduces squirrelhead compilers into ever expanding box sets. Maybe Can were right all along to withhold their archives. Often left out of accounts of the group is their interest in alchemy, magick, season, mind weather — a necessarily hit and miss methodology. And if you want an instant definition of Damo Suzuki Band, it's the sound of Can stripped of all alchemy. While Can per se aren't to blame for this particular seven CD insanity, it is surely only Suzuki's late connection with them (and the presence in his group of master drummer Liebezeit) that can in any remote way begin to justify someone sitting down and thinking that seven hours of this sludge was a good idea.

Somewhere under the mind numbing repetition is *possibly* a half decent single or double CD which — paradoxically — would have made a far more valuable historical document. CDs 'o' and 'e' — out of the p/r/o/m/i/s/e line-up — probably work best as self-contained wholes, otherwise there is hardly a peep of anything unearthly here, just the occasional flash of Liebezeit's polyrhythmic ochre light and a lot of plod prod rock from the singularly uninspired Matthias Keul (keyboards) and Dominik Von Senger (guitar). Even when things threaten to take fire like a Boeing wing going up in flames, the truly awful keyboard werk or nugatory guitar fills drag us down to the level of a second rate New Wave group.

Embedded in the manifold field of Can, Suzuki's voice was like a shriek from another dimension — one element in an alchemical work in process, here — at 17, 18, 20, 24 minutes (hardly a minute of which doesn't feature his 'singing') its inherent weakness becomes all too apparent. One texture, one pace, no ups or downs — just the unrelieved vocal emissions of a man who thinks everything that comes out of his mouth deserves retrieval. He is no Artaud, he is not even Mark E Smith on an off night — he sounds more like a boring old drunk or Vic Reeves 'club singer' gone lazily rococo. You have to wonder if there isn't a hint of that old reverse ethnocentrism about this project — a bit of the old Lee Perry syndrome — where someone trading on past glory is allowed to get away with arrant wuffle just because he's supposed to be this non-white innocent or un-Western Other, helplessly, boundlessly making this alien art we with our tidy Western minds can't penetrate. Crap, racist crap to boot. Art only begins with sublimation, editing and structural sense — and only if this was the most nova core Improv would normal constraints not apply. It isn't, it's like a bad 70s dream of endless 'jamming' (and sexist sleeve art) come back to haunt us.

Suzuki is barely interesting enough for a normal CD, and it illustrates just how far archive madness has gone when this sort of freak release is allowed through. And the really annoying thing — the last bleedin' straw — is that this bumper package supplies virtually no context details. One group photo childishly scrawled over, a thank you list, desultory recording dates — and that's it. This is archive arrogance without effort, and without reward.

So — if your idea of fun is seven or 14 or 21 or 480 minutes of avant twee — a man yelling *"step onto the lilo!"* without pause — and really bad guitar playing — put your hand in your pocket. If, on the other hand, you want to cherish unblemished Can memories, then steer well clear. Perhaps when Mark E Smith recorded "I Am Damo Suzuki" he slyly knew more than he was letting on — for if there is a 'Damo Suzuki' these days it is indeed MES and not Damo himself, who for the most part sounds like a grubby relic. Far better he had done a Beefheart and retired into new career in another context, and left us our crucible dreams.

IAN PENMAN

To Rococo Rot
The Amateur View
CITY SLANG SLANG087172 CD

To Rococo Rot are the fresh faced frontmen behind an electronically tinted new wave of German rock who have managed to convince much of the music press that their approach is the way forward. As this review is being written, the trio are preparing to support Faust, the newly re-energised 70s Krautrock behemoth whose musical attack leans more towards hallucinatory, oil smeared rock brutalism rather than the minimalist Eno-like cloudwatching technique that To Rococo Rot have seemingly adopted and made their own.

The fact that the trio are all trained fine artists, and their collective moniker originally came from the name of an exhibition in Berlin that brothers Robert and Ronald Lippok set up, suggests that any suppressed Krautrock roots go back to early Cluster. This trio's music (like that of Sky label-era Moebius and Roedelius) has an art gallery installation feel to it, a white walled ambiance that provides the perfect location to display their sonic portraits, landscapes and abstracts.

The Amateur View is an elegantly designed, impressive extension to TRR's sound gallery in that, this time, the pieces on display sound more rounded and alive — and not just another procession of sparsely delivered beats, squeaks and rumbles. Accompanied by New York turntablist I-Sound on the Can-influenced "A Little Asphalt Here And There" and D from London's Soul Static Sound (who collaborated on their last 12") on the rough grooved "This Sandy Piece", the group are caught peering out of a speeding car window at urban and natural environments with a wide eyed curiosity, their near alien perspective alert to a different sense of beauty. To Rococo Rot are blessed with the ability to create a robotically sensual soundtrack for nearly every mood, emotion and sunset you'll ever experience. And somehow that's enough.

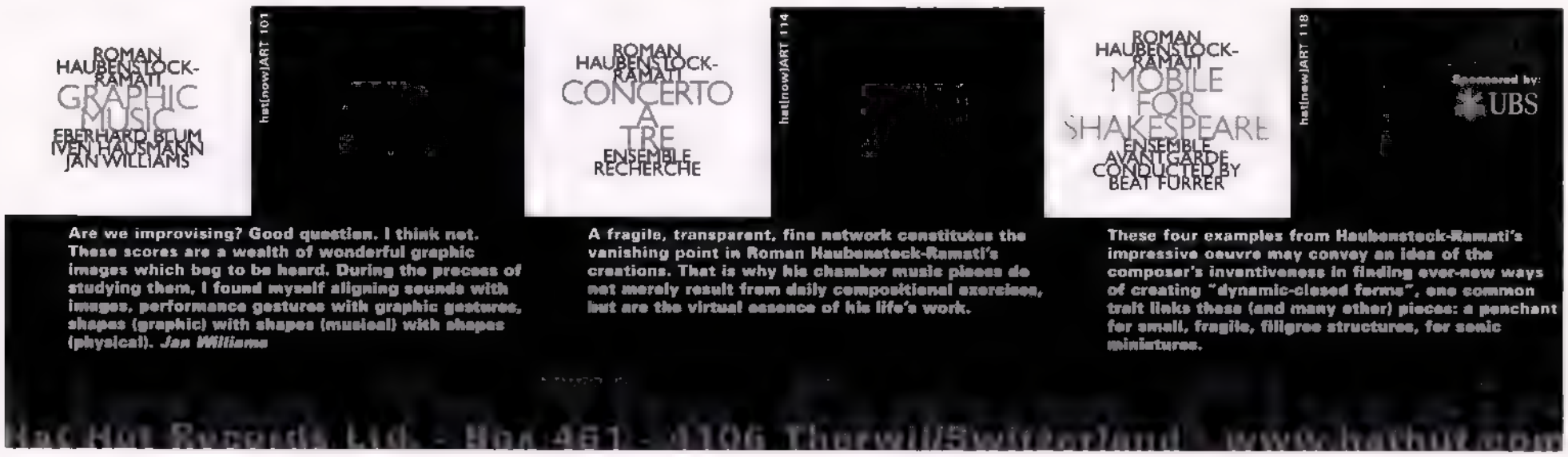
EDWIN POUNCEY

Tortoise + The Ex
In The Fishtank
KONKURRENT FISH5 CD

The additive property of The Ex is that anything plus Ex equals Ex. It happened with the Improv types they played with on 1996's *Instant*, and it happens for sure on this quickie six-track collaboration with Tortoise, written and recorded in two days in the Netherlands: they completely overwhelm their partners, to the point where the result simply sounds like an Ex record with some extra instrumentation. That's not meant as a putdown — they pull their collaborators along with them because they're very strong musicians, not to mention incredibly loud.

The difference between the groups here, though, is that Tortoise like to take their time working up a groove and exploring where it might go, and The Ex prefer to have a pre-set, if open, composition, and rip away at it until it's done. By the time the Chicagoans have figured out how they might delicately alter the texture of what they're doing, the Amsterdam crew is already finished.

The 'dirty' sounds favoured by The Ex — distortion, scraping, broken cymbals — tend to eat up Tortoise's cleaner timbres. Even on "Pleasure As Usual" the most subdued piece here, you can hear the losing battle that Jeff Parker's light, smooth plucks fight against Ex guitars, snagging and tearing whatever's within reach. The more successful moments on *In The Fishtank* exploit that inequality, particularly



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"Central Heating", inspired by a Misha Mengelberg piece, in which a little organ melody tries to make itself heard through a series of compressed call-and-response blurts. Too much of the rest of the disc is awkward and directionless, though — there's an audible "I dunno, what do *you* want to do?" vibe. On his group's own recordings, Ex vocalist GW Sok makes a virtue of his three note range by barking out allusive, punning lyrics, but here the best he can manage is *"Did you comb?"* — a riff on an old Lenny Bruce routine via Chumbawamba. File under more-is-less collaborations.

DOUGLAS WOLK

We™

The Square Root Of Negative One

ASPHODEL ASPH0994 CD

The music generated by New York's Illbient scene has rarely sounded as good as its manifestos. While the concept has been consistently intriguing — imagine an electronica that draws on Cage's aleatory compositions as much as it does on Techno and abstract beats, tending towards the edgy condition of sound sculpture rather than the soporific sedative of Ambient — the yawning gulf between idea and the dreary reality has regularly bordered on the audacious. And *The Square Root Of Negative One*, a listless dabble along the dreary continuum between digital dub and arthouse drum 'n' bass, is a dispiriting case in point.

We™ have a nice line in restless, buzzing basslines, which inject a certain oikish energy into uptempo excursions like "12 Diablos" and "Back And Forth". But allied with lumpy, inflexible beats, the net result is pace without dexterity — for all the bouts of mannered vigour, the music lacks the quicksilver shifts and touches of rhythmic complexity that generate real excitement. The best moments come when the rhythms are counterpointed by slowly revolving melancholy loops — a reedy organ in "12 Diablos", an oscillating drone in "El Mosquito", what sounds like bagpipes in "Protons" — but We™ play their trump card too regularly, and even the best tricks get monotonous. Especially when the counterpoint is a skinny Gothic guitar line straight from the Andrew Eldritch songbook ("Rirrka")

The lack of internal development means that too many tunes outstay their welcome. Downtempo excursions like "Modulana" and "Hiela" cruise through hermetically sealed spaces, relying on chromium slashes of percussion or transient ornamental flourishes for textural interest. For this listener, the shroud of mundanity was only lifted by the paired opening and closing tracks "Birrmbau" and "Uabmirib" — dark, rattling, cyclical drones which gather and disperse like nausea, throwing off spatters of white noise to create an unsettling sculptural presence. For the most part, though, *The Square Root Of Negative One* amounts to practically nothing.

CHRIS SHARP

the boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

With a name that evokes images of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Phoenix punk trio **Meat Puppets** screamed out of their first single "In A Car" (1981) like teenage girls with Ed Gein's grandpappy swinging an axe at their tails. Their crabapple punk was already prettying up by the time they recorded their debut album *Meat Puppets* (Rykodisc RCD10466 CD) six months later, though you wouldn't know it from the psychotic pace at which they ripped into their songs. Before Tokyo's Musica Transonic broke all speed records while busting the VU meter, it stood as one of the most exciting hardcore albums ever made. In this CD revision, which more than doubles its length with the addition of the "In A Car" single and 12 extra tracks including covers of The Grateful Dead and Neil Young, it becomes apparent that Meat Puppets always had a richer sense of Americana to draw from than punktrash.

Consequently, the landmark *Meat Puppets II* (RCD10467) isn't the canyon-leap sideways it seemed on its 1983 release. Drummer Derrick Bostrom, whose commentaries illuminate Ryko's handsomely produced CD reissue programme, recalls that they no longer thought recording on acid was a good idea. Combined with the growing distaste of brothers Curt and Cris Kirkwood (guitar and bass respectively) for being gobbed on, they tilted towards Country music played in the unnatural glow of a desert nuclear test. Being able to hear what they were singing this time round had its rewards in lyrics like *"There's nothing on top/except a bucket and a mop/and an illustrated book about birds"* (from "Plateau")

They recorded another handful of records over the next five years, with more erratic results, though the augmented *Out My Way* (RCD10468) and *Up On The Sun* (RCD10469) have their great moments. However, it's hard to believe that the slutty, coarsened jocks of the first-time release of *Live In Montana* (from 1988, RCD10472) are the same trio who'd been documenting the weirdness of the late 20th century American wilderness with their eyes wide open just seven years before.

For a genre that purportedly spat on guitar soloists, punk sicked up some damn fine players. But then the US variant was never so dogmatic about these things as the British. The interplays between Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd on the live **Television** set *The Blow Up* (ROIR RUSCD8249 2xCD) are as heady and marvellously disorientating as you could hope for from the group that posited punk as Rimbaud's simultaneous derangement of the senses. After hearing these 1978 versions of "Little Johnny Jewel", "Friction" and "Marquee Moon", the official studio tracks sound somewhat unsatisfying.

The latest reissues of two heady, early examples of Mayo Thompson's psychedelic improvisational unit, **The Red Crayola**, in full flight this time come on fashionable 180 gram pure virgin vinyl. Of the pair, the group's 67 debut *The Parable Of Arable Land* (Get Back GET533 LP) best retains its deserved cult status. Housed in a sleeve doodled by an acid casualty, its collection of surreal songs is made wilder by the inclusion of several "Free Form Freak Out" intermissions, courtesy of the creative Crayola commune The Familiar Ugly. 32 years later, the resulting chaos still sounds satisfyingly strange. Their third album, *God Bless The Red Krayola And All Who Sail With It* (Get Back GET534 LP), focused more on short, fragmented songs. Partly acoustic, it is worth hearing, but fails to eclipse the frothing madness and energy that was poured into *Parable*.

Zofia Komeda's labour of love continues with four further CD documents from the archive of her late husband, the Polish jazz composer **Krzysztof Komeda**: *Sophia's Tune* (Power Bros PB00167 CD), *Roman Two* (PB00169 CD), *What's Up Mr Basie* (PB00171 CD), and *Astigmatic: In Concert* (PB00173 CD). More than just mementos of a gifted composer who died young, they are fascinating documents of a decade, of an outlook, and a temperament. Komeda's musical imagination was essentially dramatic, and his compositions often enact some socio-political scenario: it is tempting to see 60s Poland in microcosm in his clashing of dreams of freedom, and dramas of obsessive recurrence, of liberating fantasy and imposed routine. Komeda's piano playing was ideally suited for such a conceptual counterpoint. Every slight incremental gain is hard won. Bass and drums replicate his struggle. Meanwhile, trumpeter Tomasz Stanko, who later achieved broader recognition with The Globe Unity Orchestra and Cecil Taylor, keeps the vision of transcendence alive. Also featured is the alto playing of Michal Urbaniak, now an accomplished fusion violinist. The recording quality overall is variable, and at times there is some tape deterioration. But the energy of the music is never compromised. ☐ *Reviewed by Julian Cowley, Biba Kopf and Edwin Pouncey*

in brief avant rock

Reviewed by **Tom Ridge**

Bailterspace Solar 3 TURNBUCKLE RECORDS TB017 CD
After last year's fearsome *Photon* mini-album, Bailterspace's new full length release is a bit of a disappointment. While the dense, distorted guitar playing is still present, the songs themselves sound enervated, and there's an over-reliance on what amounts to pretty pedestrian garage rock. Their explosive versatility contrasts with some interesting low key atmospherics, but generally it doesn't have that sudden jolt of energy needed to launch it skywards.

Sandra Bell City Of Sorrows VHF VHF39 CD
The sleeve art doesn't support it, but I imagine Sandra Bell has a fondness for leather trousers, as *City Of Sorrows* filters its introspection through a haze of rock-chick cool. The guitars are scratchy and brittle: the riffs sharply truncated, and the lyrical territory familiar: *"Have I become something I don't like again,"* she drawls in "Seven Day Descent". In fact, Bell tries on a number of musical guises here, from low slung singer-songwriter stuff to more experimental sound collages. It may not quite hold together but it has a certain sang-froid attitude to help it on its way.

Kevin Coyne Sugar Candy Taxi RUF RECORDS RUF1032 CD
Hovering somewhere between Captain Beefheart, Tom Waits and John Martyn, Kevin Coyne remains a steadfastly original performer of idiosyncratic songs, which range from the beguilingly gentle to the emotionally abrasive. This latest addition to a lengthy discography finds him in fine form, aided by his two musician sons. Though he's been living in Germany for much of the past two decades, there's still something very English about his whimsical lyrics and stream of consciousness narratives. However, the rich rawness of his singing invests them with real emotional integrity.

Echoboy Echoboy POINTBLANK NO NUMBER CD
Made up of refugees from the Heavenly label, Echoboy's debut album is an initially stunning exploration of the rock/analogue electronica interface. The epic "Flashlegs Suite" takes in sweeping orchestral synths, noisy breakbeats and live instruments, and they keep up the momentum through the first half of the album with a succession of brilliantly conceived pieces. But once they shift to song-based material, they lose their way among some unremarkable indie rock with inflated ambitions. The sharpness of the album's turnaround leaves Echoboy sounding like two distinctly different groups.

Eighty Mile Beach Inclement Weather OM RECORDS OM008 CD
This would-be modernist folk music mixes samples and electronica with more 'organic' instrumentation. There are some interesting meeting points, such as the breakbeats and jazz guitar of "What We Did Last Summer", but they're mostly obscured by overly complex arrangements that colour in too much of the background. Whatever patience you have left is likely to be exhausted by the lyrics of the pretentious "Sparse Moments Sublime" and the frankly embarrassing "Hempen Homespun".

Forty Nine Hudson For Weeks At A Time THE MUSIC FELLOWSHIP MF001 CD
They might be named after a car in Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*, but Forty Nine Hudson are in no danger of breaking the speed limit. They specialise in slowly unfolding rock vistas, where repeated guitar phrases gradually pick up an inexorable momentum and build to a noisy finish.

Lee Hazlewood Cowboy In Sweden SMELLS LIKE RECORDS SLR030 CD
Lee Hazlewood Farmisht, Flatulence, Origami, ARF!!! And Me. . . SMELLS LIKE RECORDS SLR031 CD
Although Hazlewood has something of a cult reputation as a songwriter, neither of these releases really offer much by way of explanation. The *Cowboy In Sweden* album, originally released in 1970, is equal parts Country kitsch and orchestrated melodrama. Part of the interest in Hazlewood derives from the way his material sometimes transcends its saccharine arrangements but this particular talent is rarely in evidence here. "Leather And Lace", for instance, offers some vague fetishistic connotations – *"The leather was hot/The lace it was not"* – but it is too crass to be truly sexy. The Dylan-like "Cold Hard Times" is harder lyrically but ultimately trite. The second of these releases, recorded with The Al Casey Combo in 1996-97, is a disappointing trawl through standards like "Honeysuckle Rose", "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Makin' Whoopee", with bland, unadventurous arrangements.

I'm Being Good Poisonous Life INFINITE CHUG CHUG12 CD
Small Things Keep Calm And Dig INFINITE CHUG CHUG8 CD
I'm Being Good produce some intense, detuned music, with nods to Truman's Water and Polvo. Storming through a series of uncompromising, even punishing songs with hardcore leanings, they exercise their math-rock chops with some style but fail to reshape the template round their own personality.

Small Things is Andrew Clare of I'm Being Good in a more reflective mood, indulging himself on some guitar-led instrumentals and loose, fragmentary pieces. Some of it is vague and insubstantial, but moments of peculiar beauty shine through. Sadly, there's just not enough of them to stop this album feeling overlong. Definitely one in need of a firm editing hand to whip it into shape.

Low Secret Name TUGBOAT TUG007 CD
Reconciling their more experimental side with their minimalist origins, Low have turned out their most substantial album so far. Employing a wider range of textures but retaining the integrity of strong but understated songwriting, *Secret Name* features a succession of quietly powerful tracks which contrast sparse musical embellishments with dramatic surges of strings. Whether they're in heart rending mode or invoking a kind of becalmed awe, the voices of Alan Sparhawk and Mimi Parker constitute the music's emotional core.

Mogwai Come On Die Young CHEMIKAL UNDERGROUND PCHEM033 CD
Though they're high on punk rock attitude, Glaswegian group Mogwai's album is a subdued affair, with moments of graceful beauty nestled inside gathering stormclouds. Beginning with a priceless Iggy Pop monologue against a gently melodic backing, *Come On* progresses through a series of sluggishly beautiful guitar pieces, whose calm aura is only disturbed by the noisy crescendos of "Kappa" and "Christmas Steps".

Mother Mallard Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Co 1970-1973 CUNEFORM RUNE109 CD
The Moog-dominated sound of this tortuously named, all-synth trio from the early 70s has come full circle, and now sounds like contemporary post-rock. "Ceres Motion" has drawn-out drones and pulsating bass sounds, "Cloudscape For Peggy" planes out into a sedate soundscape of tonal movements, and the accelerating percussive cracks on "Easter" sound like minimalist electronica. Having said that, Mother Mallard don't exactly sound visionary. Their contemporaneity is more an indictment of modern electronica's lack of imagination.

The Olivia Tremor Control Black Foliage BLUE ROSE BRRC1005782 CD
Black Foliage is a modernised American variant on the kind of 60s English psychedelia that began with *Revolver* and reached its apotheosis with Pink Floyd's *Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* and The Pretty Things' *SF Sorrow*: the guitars are suitably fuzzy, the vocals harmonise nicely, and when all else fails turn up the phasers. But all too knowing, The Olivia Tremor Control lack the charm of their ancestors, and while their use of linking fragments and offbeat interludes suggest an open-ended adventurousness, ultimately the album seems to fold in on itself. Its structure collapses under the weight of the group's top-heavy ambitions, which lead them to smother their offbeat neo-psychedelia in studio trickery.

Pram Telemetric Melodies DOMINO WIG65 CD
Pram do their share of flirting with the past but they fuse the disparate components together with enough sleight of hand to leave you questioning the vintage of their components. This compilation contains a diverse range of styles, from the dub-jazz lope of "Last Astronaut" to the toybox melodies of "60 Years Of Telephoney" and the fluttering wah-wah of "Superchouete". If their music is a piled up retro-futurist cabaret/lounge jazz fusion, it is also supple and playful, and it's not lacking in soul.

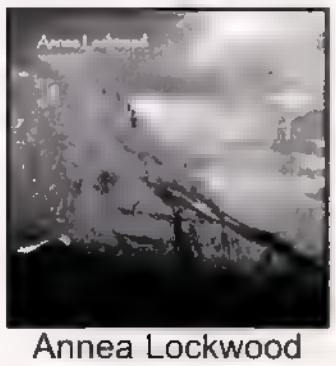
Quintron These Hands Of Mine RHINESTONE/SKINGRAFT GR57 CD
Lurking in the same avant-garage as Lake Of Dracula and The Spo-Its, there is considerably less to Quintron than meets the eye. Mostly consisting of rudimentary, keyboard-led stompalongs, *These Hands Of Mine* doesn't so much embrace the trash aesthetic as hug it to death. Nothing original emerges from their particular junkpile. "Caveman 5000" has a certain primitivist savvy, but it's not enough to pull the album out of the doldrums.

Rancid Poultry Sofa RPP UK NO NUMBER CD
Despite possessing a name that makes them sound like an obscure hardcore thrash offshoot, this Leeds-based group are in fact an interesting noise-improv outfit, combining coruscating guitar with drawn out grooves and gritty atmospherics. It sounds raw but spontaneous, if a little too ramshackle at times. They haven't always quite worked out when to stop playing but their basic dynamic is streamlined enough to drive them clear out of the noise ghetto.

Solar Coaster Solar Coaster TURNBUCKLE TB015 CD
By way of contrast with their enervated labelmates Bailterspace (see above), Solar Coaster sound fully energised from the start, with high velocity guitars chiming and echoing above an accelerated rhythm section. Their mixture of spacious aerodynamics and speedy delivery with a melodic centre recalls Husker Du's *New Day Rising*, but Solar Coaster execute it with panache. There's barely a dip in quality throughout, although its impact would have sustained better at two thirds of its length. □

Paul Panhuysen
Partitas For Long Strings

Eliane Radigue
Trilogie de la Mort
(3-CD set)



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in brief critical beats

Reviewed by **Peter Shapiro**

Chasm/Bannlust Split 12" FAT CAT FAT026 12"
Chasm is Main's Robert Hampson getting loose with off-kilter breakbeats made out of gongs, clicks and pick-up sticks. He's still prone to leaving the equipment droning on in the background while he takes lengthy teabreaks, but here it works because he's got a groove running down the middle cementing the whole thing together. Vienna's Bannlust, on the other hand, think big by using the digital version of the drummers of Kodo, synth builds from Joey Beltram and Ultravox, the Roland philharmonic and the sound of water dripping in Ali Baba's cave.

The Crown Royals Funky-Do! ESTRUS ESD1255 CD
From those fine folks at Washington's Estrus label comes this nifty disc of chitlin circuit revivalism. The Crown Royals are four guys from Chicago in love with the Fantastic Johnny C, Dyke & The Blazers, The JBs and The Meters, who manage to do a damn fine job emulating their heroes. That the groove isn't quite as loose as that of their forebears is down to Ken Vandermark's angular sax style rather than any shortcomings in the rhythm section. But these boogaloo imitations still swing regardless, and their fusion of Rodger Collins and Las Vegas grind deserves to be heard.

Jonny L The Bellz/Raise PIRANHA PIH001 12"
The first release on Jonny L's new label, "The Bellz" is a stroke of minor genius. Taking all the hallmarks of drum 'n' bass circa 1999 – stiff, banging beat, wah-wah snippets, Electro noises, various FX and processes — Jonny L has made sense of it all by shoving them in a tiny space and shooting them around like bionic ping-pong balls. The flipside, "Raise", has the same beat that threatens to hurtle out of time, but without the Jackson Pollock splatter effect.

Kings Of Tomorrow The Beginning DISTANCE DI0849 CD
This mix compilation from relatively unknown NYC disco producers Kings Of Tomorrow is for all the rhinestone purists out there. They quite capably cover both Roy Ayers's "Expansions" and The Blackbyrds' "Rock Creek Park" without letting the tracks dissolve into gelatinous jazz ooze. Like Masters At Work, they add a hint of HipHop's boom and skull-snapping snares to the skipping hi-hats, and their gospel moves are as uplifting as the real deal.

MK2 Shaolin Soul GROOVE ATTACK GAP043 12"
Despite the cliched sleeve (Bruce Lee kicking Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's ass in *Game Of Death*) and worn out Labi Siffre sample, "Shaolin Soul" is a fine blend of blaxploitation thematics and drum 'n' bass's fragmented rhythmic principles. What makes the track, though, is a wobbling, dread bass that you seem to only hear on Speed Garage records these days. On the flip, "Year 2000 And Beyond" and "1/0" are both OK downbeat tracks that would probably sound a lot better in double time.

Mr Scruff Get A Move On NINJA TUNE ZEN1280 CD/12"
The title track of this Mancunian weirdo's latest EP is another one of those blends of music from the 1930s with House beats. Unlike the last time this sort of thing was successful — Cajmere's mix of Dajae's "Brighter Days" in 1994 — the Depression era ambience is not a mere snippet, but almost the entire track. The rest of the EP is OK — a nice bassline here, an overdone sound effect record cut-up there — but "Get A Move On" is really where Scruff's much vaunted zaniness actually works.

Omnivore On The Pull HYDROGEN DUKEBOX DUKE058 12"
Connecting the dots between The Time, 2Pac, Arthur Baker, The Gap Band, Ananda Shankar and CJ Bolland, "On The Pull" is nu-skool breakbeat, or whatever they're calling it this week, that you can believe in. The flip, "Old Skool New Boy", is a bit more retro and purist in its Electro leanings, but adds just enough hints of Murder City Techno to prove that mimicry is not the only way that Omnivore looks for the perfect beat.

Ozomatli Superbowl Sundae ALMO SOUNDS ALM63 CD/12"
Yet more block party perfection from Jurassic 5's Cut Chemist and Chali 2na. The original version of "Superbowl Sundae" is a killer mixture of sitar, the "Mardi Gras" break, JB guitar, Latin funk horns, reggae skank, rap for rap's sake, scratching, and a bhangra beat. For all the ingredients, it feels like a unified whole rather than hipster, PoMo bricolage. The Peanut Butter Wolf mix is more purely HipHop, what with its fine scratching from Shortkut and a G-Funk synth whine stolen from Dr Dre.

Plaid Peel Session WARP WAP119 CD
The opening track, "Scoobs", is a lovely little mover that perfectly assimilates a cod Latin groove into its electronic matrix of mercury melody and stereo panning rhythms — it's a bit like Salsoul's Bebu Silvetti jamming with Tangerine Dream. "Eph" ups the Klaus Schultze quotient and replaces the Caribbean with Sheffield circa 1981. "Bo Bootch" has cyborg dolphin noises and singsong Bontempi organ on top of a scratchy HipHop beat denuded of its funk. "Cold" is the closest to straightahead Techno and is pretty faceless.

Random Too Stoned To Sneeze — Without Regretting It EVIL TEEN ETR1009 CD
Random is the drum 'n' bass moniker of San Franciscan producer Jon Drukman, who is probably better known as the man behind The Bass Kittens and the onetime engineer for the Hardkiss brothers. This won't impress any of the technology obsessed British producers, but it may wow the home listener with its commitment to both rhythmic dexterity and sonic boom. And unlike his Limey compatriots, Drukman isn't so single-minded that he can't absorb influences from Aphex Twin as well as Optical and Photek.

Super_Collider Head On LOADED LOADED 1 CD
Super_Collider are Brighton's Cristian Vogel and Jamie Lidell, but they sound more like American R&B futurist Timbaland's evil twin. Where Timbaland's particulate beats slip and slide over an impossibly metallic surface, Super_Collider's mix of R&B and electronica is brewed in the engine room of a nuclear sub. The skipping hi-hats and cyberbeats feel waterlogged, and everything is shrouded in a steamy blanket of Electro-bass that weighs it all down, but not so much that things don't swing. At its best the music fuses Weldon Irvine's weirder moments with Black Dog, Yarbrough & Peoples and Armand Van Helden. Lidell's Prince imitations via Bootsy Collins's cartoon persona may be a joke, but they work perfectly with the music, just like Beth Gibbons's overwrought stylisation meshed with Portishead's melodramatic soundtrack thefts.

Witchman Vs Jammin Unit Inferno INVISIBLE RECORDS INV 135 CD
While this dub album of Jammin Unit's *Deaf, Dub & Blind* won't convince you that combining dub and dance music is anything but a played out idea, it is still more than a catalogue of drop-out and skanking basslines. The dynamics are as dreary and lagging as you'd expect, but the textures are often a touch above the run of the mill. Even if they are just as mock Gothic as any Controlled Bleeding album, they give a sense of purpose to all this trudging through quicksand. ☐

in brief electronica

Reviewed by **David Howell**

The Aphex Twin Windowlicker EP WARP WAP105 CD/12"
While it's cool that the unhealthily deified Aphex continues lobbing spanners, false moves and warped humour at an ever adoring audience, could he possibly be stumbling through some mini-crisis in production? A first hearing of "Windowlicker" leaves me less than convinced. Despite generous snatches of amazingly chopped up, stop-start programming and a final few minutes of hugely distorted (and equally catchy) bass-heavy riffing, I'm left kind of empty, as though the frame of the track isn't quite working. You end up questioning whether another twisted, yet ultra-expensive video has been devised around the music, or vice-versa. Maybe it shouldn't matter. More skilled yet no longer as fresh or engaging as half the unknowns and outsiders scattered across this page, here's hoping he can escape being reduced to grand gesturing.

Arovane Occer CITY CENTRE OFFICES BLOCK001 7"
Having spent the last decade creating in isolation,1999 looks set to be the year Uwe Zahn, aka Arovane, emerges to stamp himself onto the MAS/Skam/Chocolate Industries scheme of electronics. Following up his excellent debut 12" on Din, these two tracks further showcase the Berliner's way with scuttling beat programming and melodics. While not quite up to the high standard of his previous releases, the understated "Occer" nonetheless grows on you with each fresh airing. The listener is seduced by the sugary prisms and icicle tones sparkling underneath its twisting, glacial melody and micro-popping rhythms.

Anthony Childs/Stock, Hausen & Walkman Over Napoli/Dirty 30 Something SLUT SMALLS SMALL003 7"
The third instalment in Manchester magazine/label *Jockey Slut*'s split 7" series. On "Over Napoli", Anthony Childs shakes himself free from the minimalist Techno of his Surgeon alias to expand his interests in more anchorless, Ambient territory, not unlike the one he traverses with Mick Harris and Andrew Read. Forging a dark, spectral atmosphere, processed metallic loops slowly flicker in and out of earshot, as disembodied foreign voices poke in through cracks in the mix. On the flipside, SH&W slice off a couple of throwaway locked-grooves, before rolling out a curious, bric-a-brac party piece that begins as a strangely pop-ish grafting of Autechre style beats, uplifting chords and samba percussion. A chorus of Lieutenant Pigeon's "Dirty Old Man" is speedshifted until it collapses into a shabby, belching mess, to provide a crabby paean to growing old disgracefully.

46,000 Fibres Reconstructed EP DYSFUNCTIONAL DYSC4 12"
Not having heard the source material from which this remix compilation sprang, it's hard to properly ascertain just how radical/respectful these seven reconstructions really are. Brixton-based newcomers Orgone take a bold and impressive first step in production, scratching out a flickering 17 minute soundscape of aleatory electronics. Following on, the self-explanatory Live Fibres conjure a visitation of mean 80s Industrial electronics: feedback, crude, Eric Random-style beatbox, and some seriously sleazy synth abuse. Elsewhere, T Stone's "Fluid", and Leon M-J's melding of vapour banks and a fairly lame HipHop break are far less successful incursions. Though patchy on a macro level, *Reconstructed* warrants recognition, if only for its A-side explorations.

Elektro Nova/Electro Nova Elektro Nova/Electro Nova SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND STS0031 CD
Demanding micro-attentiveness and a will for immersion, Norwegian Kare Dehle Thorstads deploys violin, sampler and electronics to form a crisp, ultra-minimal drone space, running at 70, 20, ten and 30 minutes respectively, four tracks are drawn out over two CDs. A slow-bowed violin is processed through FX and rendered as pure drone. Making inevitable geographical comparisons, the effect is akin to a kind of snow blindness, conjuring – not unlike Main – imagery of desolate, Arctic wastes or depopulated landscapes, the drone as product of industrial processes. Any sense of motion or shifts in focus occur as slow, almost imperceptible events. Fade-outs linger for an eternity, hovering at the periphery of audibility, while elsewhere rising sounds and rhythms slowly insinuate themselves in your brain, playing tricks on your consciousness.

Nintendo Teenage Robots We Punk Einheit DHR CD008 CD
The latest in DHR's Limited Edition series, Nintendo Teenage Robots sees Alec Empire expanding his musical lexicon via the raw, blipvert sonics of the videogame. *We Punk Einheit* consists of 19 (though my CD counts 26) brief sketches, constructed entirely on a pocket-sized, programmable Nintendo Gameboy. Like the unhinged experiments on Empire's solo album *Les Etoiles Des Filles Mortes*, but rendered in far sharper dynamics, much of it resembles the choppy, erratic soundings of machine-speak: crude, serial strings of blips, bleeps and crunches. The album freaks with the alien sounds of our leisure environment. Continuously streaming back memories of a personal gaming history, it evokes an instant nostalgia for onscreen adventures of the recent past. As a throwaway experiment, *We Punk* – utilises given machine parameters while privileging individual creativity. Yet part of you is left wondering whether the project might be recuperable as an endorsement for Nintendo. Programmed through a lifetime's immersion in gaming and game-noises, it begs some intriguing questions. Who's playing who?

Pomassl & Kodwo Eshun Architectronics CRAFT CRAFT38 CD
A collaboration between Sabotage tone-manipulator Franz Pomassl and self-proclaimed 'concept-technician' (and *Wire* contributor) Kodwo Eshun, *Architectronics* meshes the Austrian's scratchy, writhing electronic smearings with a reading of a text-poem reconstructed from chipped off fragments of Eshun's tome on black sonic fiction, *More Brilliant Than The Sun*.
Over a single, 43 minute track, Eshun's dry, spoken word delivery is processed through various FX to resemble a mutating, robotic incantation which prowls a sparse, anchorless electronic void of modulating, occasionally awesome sonics. At times it recalls the simmering threat of Throbbing Gristle's "Hamburger Lady", and at times sonic texture and voice cohere to good effect, but for long periods the beat less, howling void, monotone voice and lack of multi-textural depth leave you yearning for the deliciously dereict deliveries of The Jungle Brothers and Sensational, or Alan Vega's sparkjams with Pan Sonic.

Squarepusher Budakhan Mindphone EP WARP WAPLP62 CD
Following on from last year's *Music Is Rotted One Note* album, Squarepusher's latest offering marks a major shift in sound. Cleaner and less cluttered, Tom Jenkinson has integrated its jazz among a diversity of approaches dropped into a depthless expanse of dub. It's close run, but the best of these seven tracks is the opener, "Iambic 5 Poetry". Richly textured and riddled with neat, dubby details, the track opens by reviving ghosts of Scientist, with sounds and beats emitting blankets of reverb across its terrain. But it's the sheer emotional pull of the track and its sumptuous, interlocked melodies that really hit home. With a series of hooks to die for and produced with precision, this is Squarepusher at his finest. □

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the SPRAWL

in brief global

Reviewed by **Julian Cowley**

José Barrense-Dias Saga Nordestina KARDUM 3004083 CD
The arid expanses of Brazil's North East have fostered a rich tradition of oral storytelling. Balladeer José Barrense-Dias was shaped by that poetry and music, and *Saga Nordestina* repays the debt. It also remembers the cangaceiros, bandits who, during the early decades of this century, fought rapacious landowners and state authorities on behalf of the rural poor. These figures consequently loomed large in the oral culture of the singer's childhood. Memory itself drives this vivid yet reflective music. Assisted by percussionist Coaty De Oliveira, Barrense-Dias traces intricate paths of recollection through his seasoned vocals and captivating acoustic guitar articulations.

Lili Boniche Alger Alger CDA CDA013 CD
Lili Boniche Boniche Dub CDA CDA014 CD
Lili Boniche is a 77 year old Algerian singer and guitarist whose voice is as suavely characterful as his appearance. On a previous CD he offered treasures of Jewish-Arabic song, and two traditional melodies are included on *Alger Alger*. Otherwise, under the auspices of producers Jean Touitou and Bill Laswell, his ensemble realises a quirkily charming set of his own compositions. The title of one song proudly asserts, "Je Chanterai Toujours La Musique Orientale". In fact, jazz, Gallic and Hispanic touches are also in evidence. Nimble violin lines weave through piano, guitar, lute and percussion over insistently throbbing bass. The mixture secures your admission to a surreal cabaret. *Boniche Dub* includes two straight live recordings, in addition to Laswell's reconstituted versions of six *Alger Alger* pieces. The treatments retain more of the originals than might be expected, extending ornamentation and relocating emphases rather than emptying the songs out. Heady, but somehow less intoxicating than Boniche taken straight.

Petro-Loukas Chalkias & Kompania Greece/Epirus WORLD NETWORK 46/WDR 32 376 CD
Petro-Loukas Chalkias was raised in a village in Epirus, a region in North West Greece on the Albanian border, where he tended goats and was taught clarinet by his father. He has become a celebrated improvisor in America and across Europe, playing with jazz groups and Indian musicians. On this excellent CD he is accompanied by his violinist brother Achileas, percussionist Nikos Kontos and Greece's foremost lute player, Christos Zotos. They play traditional music, generally slow, often stately, with a crucial role allocated to the improvisor's art. The clarinettist's startling technical agility and distinctive rotund slurring are especially effective on "Mirolor", where a lamentational drone metamorphoses into a dignified dance tune. The entire set is fine enough to stand (without irony) next to Don Byron's best work.

Sohrab Fakir/Mohamed Fakir/Ghous Bux Brohi/ Moula Bux Sand/Alla Bachayo Khoso Pakistan/Sindh: Sindhi Soul Session WORLD NETWORK 48/WDR32 378 CD
Peter Pannke and Martin Gordon travelled in desert for ten hours, enduring temperatures exceeding 50°C, in order to record Mohamed Fakir, one of the few living masters of the surando, an archaic bowed stringed instrument. Consequently you might feel obliged to listen, even if the music were less riveting than it is. The nasal intonations of the alghoza, an ancient double flute, are equally evocative of this land where Sufi spirituality supports human communities through material hardships and deprivations. A stirring ensemble led by singer Sohrab Fakir was recorded during a visit to Berlin. Away from the village and the heat the music remains uplifting.

Djivan Gasparyan Armenia Heavenly Duduk WORLD NETWORK 47/WDR 32 377 CD
After his adventure with Michael Brook on *Black Rock*, the duduk master returns to a more conventional setting with this CD, recorded last December. For the uninitiated, Gasparyan plays a small apricot wood oboe which lends itself perfectly to songs of aching lamentation. Somehow he transforms sadness into consolation, and the music, while infused with constant awareness of Armenia's tragic history, is invariably inspiriting. His accompanists apply circular breathing technique to a further duduk and its bass version, producing a resonant drone against which Gasparyan elaborates melodies of yearning and defiance.

Johan Hedin Angel Archipelago ATRIUM 398422107 CD
Musical angels usually turn out to be tricks of the light, and crystalline production of the kind found on this Swedish recording is bound to make sceptics wary. But the bright, metallic sonorities of the keyed fiddle known as the nyckelharpa are ideal for etching radiant figures. Its sound is decidedly incisive, yet not notably expressive, so Johan Hedin embeds his playing within robust arrangements for a variegated ensemble. The intention is to conjure spirits of place, the result is attractive music with colour and substance.

Immigrant Suns More Than Food PHO-NET-IC PR05981S CD
Detroit's equivalent to Three Mustaphas Three serve up ersatz Balkan folk rock on tracks like "Surfin' Albania", "Abdurrahman's Umbrella" and "Charleton Heston". The instrumentation takes its particular character from ukulele, bouzouki, two stringed fiddle and accordion, but The Suns are happy to import any instrument or stylistic component to break down lingering inhibitions in their audience. Montenegran Djeto Juncaj injects a dash of Old World authenticity, but not enough to jeopardise the ensemble's joyfully bogus impact.

Nils Økland Blå Harding MORILD 1 CD
Extensive knowledge of Norwegian folk tradition feeds into Nils Økland's music, channeled in part through his use of the Hardanger fiddle, an instrument whose sympathetic strings produce a distinctively rich yet plangent sound. That knowledge is also manifested through his taste for unusual tunings. Økland has found comparable experimentation with variant tunings in the music of Bohemian Baroque composer Heinrich Biber, who sought in the 17th century to extend the violin's capacity in order to express intense emotional states. This CD presents a set of consistently evocative, predominantly melancholic pieces. Organ, voice, cimbalom, double bass and guitar at times enhance the mood established by his solo fiddle.

Miguel Poveda Suena Flamenco HARMONIA MUNDI HM987019 CD
Suena Flamenco opens with four minutes of taut and intense unaccompanied singing, as Poveda, acclaimed for his acting in the film *La Teta Y La Luna*, establishes his vocal credentials. The tension is sustained on pieces which adopt the familiar accompaniment of febrile guitar and handclaps, but the tension slackens when voice and piano are combined, and at odd moments when sentimental strings intrude. However, this is highly impressive and affecting music while the flamenco spirit predominates.

Anoushka Shankar Anoushka ANGEL 724355672926 CD
Anoushka is the 17 year old daughter of Ravi Shankar who composed and produced the music on this recording. She has studied classical sitar for eight years, and in 1997 appeared on *Chants Of India* alongside her father and George Harrison. Now she takes centre stage, assisted by her mother Sukanya on tanpura, and by the tabla players Bikram Ghosh and Anip Chattopadhyay. The packaging is calculatingly posed, but the music is everything the pedigree suggests it should be.

Taha/Khaled/Faudel 1,2,3 Soleils BARCLAY 5471912 2XCD
The rai triumvirate were captured live in Paris last September. In addition to his recent work with Rachid Taha on the album *Olé, Olé*, Gong's Steve Hillage acted as producer and arranger here. Two string ensembles (one Egyptian, one French), horn players, rock musicians and traditional Arabic instrumentalists were drafted in for the big event. The recording inevitably lacks the intimacy of classic studio rai, and the music's intrinsic subversiveness is dulled by a context that raises the spectre of stadium rock's characteristic indulgences. Still, screams and ululations emanate from a large audience, evidently wild with excitement.

Ti-Coca & Toto Bissainthe Haiti WORLD NETWORK 43/WDR 32 373 CD
The quintet led by diminutive songster Ti-Coca plays a strand of merengue traceable to the Bantu of Mozambique via the dance music of 18th century France. He warbles winningly over accordion, banjo, double bass and percussion. More intriguing, however, are three tracks representing the legacy of Parisian voodoo diva Toto Bissainthe. The contrast enhances these stylish and powerful renditions.

Various Artists Gaga For Ya-Ya WINTER & WINTER 910041 CD
Clifton Chenier died in December 1987. This compilation, drawn from the catalogues of Rounder, Flying Fish and Tone-Cool, surveys subsequent developments in zydeco music. No tracks match the thrill of classic Chenier, such as *Bogalusa Boogie* (1975), but the collection illustrates zydeco's imported diversity. Buckwheat Zydeco underpins his infectious reading of Lee Dorsey's "Ya Ya" with a shuffling reggae beat. Terrance Simien's singing style nods towards Sam Cooke and Marvin Gaye. But for an aural equivalent to the Acadian savour of crawfish étouffe, none of the innovations rival veteran Boozoo Chavis belting out "I'm Going To The Country To Get Me A Mojo Hand".

Värttinä Vihma WICKLOW 0902663262 CD
Initially conservers of Karelian folk tradition, Varttina took on a rock aspect at the start of the 90s. On *Vihma*, their seventh album, the ten musicians sound remarkably assured, performing original compositions with purposefulness rare in a hybrid genre. Throat singers from Tuvan group Yat-Kha enhance three tracks, they are scarcely needed given the tremendous vocal quartet which fronts Varttina. The production draws on the expertise of Californian composer Richard Horowitz, known for his excursions in North Africa and the Middle East. But it is the cumulative experience and skill of the Finns that keeps musical sparks flying throughout. □

in brief hiphop

Reviewed by **Peter Shapiro**

Baby J Birth BOMB HIP-HOP BOMB2021 CD/LP
Birth is a collection of tracks produced by British beat master Baby J with a host of mostly American guest MCs. More explicitly political than most HipHop these days, it tries to disguise its occasional lack of personality with superficially compelling subject matter. However, HipHop is, next to the British class system, the most complete triumph of style over substance and this strategy rarely works. The production is thoroughly competent and most of the MCs can compete with any of the major label playas, but it's just missing that little something to bring it over.

Deep Burial Blood Samples ULTRAMACK 007 CD
This collection of gloomy atmospheres and dragging beats isn't going to convince anyone that downtempo, instrumental HipHop is anything but a spent force, but if you like this sort of thing it's not bad. Be forewarned, though: the disc is bleaker than the streets of Hull in February and about as much fun as listening to paint dry.

Dr Doom First Come, First Served COPASETIK COPA007 CD
Cannibalism, vermin for pets, body parts in his car, *"kicking your intestines like Ric Flair"*, listening to Slayer and The Staple Singers, borrowing toilet paper from his neighbours, *"taking your dick for ransom"*, eating tampons with whipped cream, hanging with Jim Jones, eating raw steak, *"putting used diapers on your windshield wipers"*, smoking embalming fluid — *First Come, First Served* is just another day at the office for Kool Keith. While Keith's schtick is a welcome respite from run of the mill HipHop (*"Looking out your Mandrian hotel window like Elvis Presley comin' down the elevator"* — say what?), it's the post-Dr Octagon breakup sucker MC disses that you notice most: *"Ignoring phone calls from broke labels that put out underground MCs/Trying to get me to rap on a wack jazz track for one G/Why are you trying to insult me/I got 40 grand for three minutes writing a song with Prodigy"*. The record's best moment, though, is when Keith skewers materialistic rappers who *"live at home with [their] Mom"*. As, umm, different as Keith is, it's the production by The Diesel Truckers that makes the record: just like The Automator and Q-Bert did with the Dr Octagon album, The Diesel Truckers manage to make brilliant, squelchy, queasy, B-movie theme music that matches Keith step for step in bizarreness.

Live Human Monostereosis FAT CAT FAT03 CD/LP
Unlike their more eggheaded singles, the debut album from the Bay Area's turntable-drums-bass trio begins with tracks that retain HipHop's sense of dynamics and love of noise. Replacing the dryness that has come to signify intelligence on some of their singles with attitude and colour, *Monostereosis* proves once and for all that you don't have to sacrifice groove for science, and that noodling in defence of experimentalism is indeed a vice. At its best, this is the kind of record that you always wanted Tortoise to make after reading about them.

Metabolics The M-Virus WORDSOUND WS030 CD
Although Mr Dead, one half of Metabolics, is apparently a make-up artist who works on low budget horror flicks, *The M-Virus* is not just another Gothic Gravediggaz sequel. Metabolics realise that East Coast HipHop's signature ambivalence is scary enough without the schlocky Dario Argento imagery, so most of the best tracks on *The M-Virus* revel in the contemporary Wild West lawlessness of Brooklyn's East New York neighbourhood. The best track, "Lyrical Chemical", however, is a string of putative sci-fi metaphors that gets by on the way Mr Dead and Big Pat attack Prince Paul's awesome beat. Elsewhere, the production — by Scotty Hard, Spectre, Mr Dead and Bimos The Overseer — is uniformly excellent, if not entirely original, although "Create And Define" does bring those Kool Herc Latin funk beats into the digital age.

Mountain Brothers Self. Volume 1 MOUNTAIN BROTHER NO NUMBER CD
Taking their name from the Chinese equivalent of Robin Hood, the Mountain Brothers are three Asian-Americans from Philadelphia in love with HipHop culture. The problem is that they love HipHop so much that they can't decide who they want to be. Half the time, they are indie MCs who *"turn phrases like Vanna White"*, bemoan their day jobs and criticise record companies because they *"are like Weight Watchers/They make you less phat and make you more popular"*. The rest of the time, though, they player-hate about as much Ma$e. But the production is uniformly excellent: Al Jackson Jr click tracks, wide bass sounds, thick keyboards, wah-wah guitars.

Noize The Whole Mess Parts I & II RITA RECORDS RITA2 CD/LP
The sleeve art of this collection of turntable mixes makes explicit references to Joseph Cornell's box collages, Da Vinci's notebooks and Michelangelo's Hand of God. While Danish DJ Noize's hands may not be as close to the Almighty as Maradona's, the jacket design is some of the best HipHop mythologising in a genre built almost entirely on bigging up its own status. Noize's turntable lore ain't bad either: "White Man's Roots" sits comfortably next to Radar and Z-Trip's "Rockstar" as turntablism's best paean to the synchronicity between the wheels of steel and Heavy Metal, while the four "Two Deck Mixes" prove you don't need overdubs to make motorvational turntable collages.

Paranoid Android featuring Cage, Space & Masai Beyond & Back DC RECORDINGS DC19 12"
Seriously dark underground HipHop from the Big Apple's rotten, worm-eaten core. Cage is part of the nasty Smut Peddlers crew and "Beyond & Back" features a similarly dirty, frugged beat, with lots of creepycrawly detail crammed into the nooks and crannies in the background. As you'd expect, "Last House On The Left" is as squalid and grim as its namesake, but where the Wes Craven flick of the same name was a knowing pisstake of Bergman's *Virgin Spring*, Cage and his associates don't play their horrorcore for laughs.

People Under The Stairs The Next Step PUTS RECORDS PUTS6002 CD
Covering Los Angeles's leftfield alongside Jurassic 5, Pharcyde and The Hieroglyphics, People Under The Stairs bring some of Pete Rock's smooth soul reminiscing to California. Unfortunately, they've left the lateral thinking back East. While Thes One and Double K come up with some good one liners and flow like Land o' Lakes, their scenarios are too linear to produce any real epiphanies. The production, though, makes great use of Easy Listening flotsam and jetsam, even if you have heard some of the beats before.

Presage Outer Perimeter FUTURE PRIMITIVE SOUND FPS001 CD/LP
Presage is the project of Mr Dibbs of Cincinnati's turntablist crew The 1200 Hobos, and Chicago's DJ Jel and MC Dose. Eschewing turntablism's usual organising principle of mix 'n' match soundbites and textural promiscuity, *Outer Perimeter* is a coherently paranoid commentary on the New World Order made up of détourned found sound, lugubrious beats and cut-ups of George Bush speeches. It might be just about as sophomoric as Negativland, but if you're not concerned about music being as rigorous as Noam Chomsky, or if you've ever laughed to one of Gil Scott-Heron's pre-concert monologues, or if you like your bong hits to be accompanied by a good dose of conspiracy theory, then this is the only collection of protest songs you'll ever need. On "Riddles", MC Dose outwits all of the media detritus with the fine stanza: *"It's a subconscious offshoot of real fantasies/It's not all that uncommon to our own species/Even if we do dispose of our own faeces/That's about all we got next to an articulated thumb and forefinger, is it not?"*. For those who like their deck antics strictly formal, check out the violin scratching on "Aliens".

Rubberoom Architechnology 3-2-1 RECORDS T211050 CD
Despite their name, this Chicago collective is nowhere near as insane as some of their underground contemporaries. There's plenty of untuned pianos, demented film music, skewed beats, elegiac strings, tracks called "The Shining" and "Pathway To The Abyss", piercing scratches that sound like the voices in your head and orchestral synth washes played by the Phantom of the Opera, but MCs Lumba and Meta-Mo concentrate instead on the classic HipHop verities of battle disses and wordplay. Sci-fi buzzwords and concepts abound, though, but not so much that their presence eliminates that other fundamental HipHop conceit — the female bloodsucker. At least they're futuristic enough to let her speak for herself.

Swollen Members Balance JAZZ FUDGE PROMO CD
Despite having the worst name in the business, Canada's Swollen Members are some of HipHop's most original talents. At the drop of a Kangol, this epic album moves from fizzing, twisted dubscapes with stream-of-consciousness sci-fi metaphors to huge, piano-fuelled jump-up anthems and brings a new range of expression to the Aleister Crowley adept wing of HipHop. While lines like *"Mischievous elves cringe at my introduction"* suggest that the MCs not only *"drink with Dionysus"* but also listen to Ronnie James Dio, the horror show imagery is tempered by classic boasts like *"Even Van Gogh looked at me and said, 'You're one piece of work'/So I said, 'Lend me an ear cause I'm the state of the art'"*, which elevate *Balance* above the merely cartoonish.

Ugly Duckling Fresh Mode 1500/BAD MAGIC MAGIC1 CD/LP
Sporting a cover by Corky McCoy, *Fresh Mode* is destined to be one of the best HipHop albums of the year. There's no strained social relevance, no mackin', no drug deals, no millennial bullshit, no playa president campaigning, just three MCs who know their history and are in love with wordplay and flowing rhymes. In among the echoes of The Beastie Boys, Rob Base, Sugarhill Gang, Eric B & Rakim, Biz Markie and The Stray Cats, there are boasts like *"You know the words like girls singing "I Will Survive""* and *"When the well runs dry my flow is the H2O/ Admitting plenty of patients like your HMO"*. Young Einstein's production is of similar no nonsense quality. □

in brief jazz

Reviewed by **Andy Hamilton**

Ran Blake Something To Live For HATOLOGY 527 CD
Like his major influence Thelonious Monk, Ran Blake developed a highly personal take on the stride solo piano tradition. His individual sense of time is often elusive and oblique, his range of dynamics and timbres remarkable. Again like Monk, Blake always has a musical purpose and never a note is wasted. Here the 64 year old pianist works solo and in duos with newcomers David 'Knife' Fabris on guitar and Guillermo Gregorio on clarinet. Blake was associated with Third Stream and still teaches at Gunther Schuller's New England Conservatory, and his choice of compositions is never obvious. Pervasive in his playing is the Spanish tinge that Jelly Roll Morton analysed in jazz back in the 1920s. It's found even in the marvellously altered version of Cole Porter's "Get Out Of Town". Yet there's nothing fey or oblique in his own strong and direct composition "Memphis". Blake remains a true original.

Arthur Blythe Lenox Avenue Breakdown KOCH 7871 CD
Now approaching 60, Blythe is one of the finest alto players of the generation of avant garde/new traditionalists. The first of a fine series for Columbia, *Lenox Avenue*, recorded in 1979, finds him in coruscating form on beautifully hard edged alto. Despite artistic success, the albums didn't shift enough units and Blythe was dropped — the usual major label story. Instrumentation and programming are characteristically challenging. James 'Blood' Ulmer (guitar), Cecil McBee (bass), Jack DeJohnette (drums) and Guillermo Franco (percussion) are a peerless line-up, while James Newton on flute and Bob Stewart on tuba expand the tonal range of the ensemble. Blythe's compositions are in essence simple vamps, but make for compelling improvisational structures, especially on the title track and "Slidin' Through". Simply magnificent.

Brasserie Trio Musique Mécanique LEO LR269 CD
Beginning as a small ensemble drawn from the ranks of The Italian Instabile Orchestra, this freewheeling Improv trio features Carlo Actis Dato on saxes and bass clarinet, Lauro Rossi on trombone and Alberto Mandarini on trumpet and flugelhorn. They encompass a bewildering variety of styles in this live recording from Pisa in 1998 — from Dixieland via tango to Italian pop songs and African music. Raucous, zany and very enjoyable.

Mark Browne Burning All Of My Back Pages MARK BROWNE OWN LABEL CDR
This is a "distillation of around 70 hours of DAT recordings I've made over an eight year period", says alto and soprano saxophonist Mark Browne. He's currently in a duo with Lol Coxhill — a clear influence in these solo recordings — and a quartet that includes cellist Mark Wastell. *Burning* is individually packaged in a twinky wallpaper sleeve, but musical wallpaper this isn't. A great concept is matched by great saxophonic slitherings, witterings, whinings and gobblings. Browne says his next project is *52 Noisy Little Clouds* — 52 CDs in one year, each in a limited run of one. Place your orders now.

Kenny Garrett Songbook WARNER 936246551 CD
Kenny Garrett Pursuance: The Music Of John Coltrane WARNER 936246209 CD
These albums from 1996 and 1997 are released for the first time in the UK to coincide with the altoist's forthcoming visit. *Songbook* features his own compositions — hardly compelling but about par for the jazz course — played by a group comprising the late Kenny Kirkland on piano, Nat Reeves on bass and Jeff 'Tain' Watts on drums. Despite its retrospective programme of Coltrane compositions, *Pursuance* has a more open feel due to the presence of guitarist Pat Metheny in place of a pianist. Garrett has an acrid tone and fluency that recalls the Coltrane inflected alto of bebop master Jackie McLean. Both had their careers lifted by a spell with Miles Davis, but Garrett, approaching 40 and no longer a young lion, doesn't quite have the same passion or individuality.

Drew Gress's Jagged Sky Heyday SOUL NOTE 121314 CD
It took a while to get onto the wavelength of this one. Bassist Drew Gress has worked with downtown improvising stalwarts Dave Douglas, Don Byron and Tim Berne (who co-produced this album), and formed the quartet Jagged Sky in 1994. This is their first CD. Guitarist Ben Monder and drummer Kenny Wollesen are busy in the New York left of centre scene — Wolleson has just toured the UK with Sex Mob — but alto saxist Dave Binney is less known. Monder's extended techniques create striking textures and Wollesen's drumming is always subtle and melodic, while the compositional approach is intricate and understated. Recommended.

Vyacheslav Guyvoronsky & Evelin Petrova Chonyi Together LEO LR268 CD
Trumpeter Guyvoronsky was sent to work in a provincial orchestra in the Siberian city of Kemerovo when he graduated from the Leningrad Conservatoire in the mid-70s. His favoured duo format came about, he says, simply from dire necessity in a land barren of competent improvisors. But he's found an able partner in young accordionist Evelin Petrova, even though she had no jazz or Improv experience before working with him. *Chonyi* is the first recording of this surprising combination. The trumpeter's original compositions inspire a haunting, affecting set of performances.

Fred Lonberg-Holm Site-Specific: Duets For Cello And Guitar EXPLAIN 001 CD
Cellist Lonberg-Holm recorded these short-ish duets with 12 guitar players in their own homes, direct to DAT, for his Chicago based label. The tracks cover a lot of ground — from slithering, scraping arco and delicate pizzicato free Improv to a variety of more tuneful material. His exploratory duet with Jim O'Rourke concludes with an unexpected, plangent ending. Michael Krasser provides a Country feel and Charles Kim is also tuneful, both against singing cello.

Roscoe Mitchell In Walked Buckner DELMARK DE510 CD
Multi-instrumentalist and founder member of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Roscoe Mitchell has been an unavoidable yet perplexing figure in post-60s jazz. His work has been incredibly uneven — as his guest experience at David S Ware's recent London gig effectively proved. *In Walked Buckner* is a follow-up to 1995's *Hey Donald* on the same label, with a similar line-up. Ex-Coltrane veteran Reggie Workman is on bass — replacing Malachi Favors — with Albert 'Tootie' Heath, the fine hard bop drummer. This is a very disparate selection, mixing straightahead and free, with Mitchell on a range of saxes, flutes and clarinets. Pianist Jodie Christian's gentle impressionism convinces on "Off Shore", with Mitchell's Oriental flute coming over strong. Though it's dedicated to contemporary classical singer Thomas Buckner, the title track is a jazz standard in 39 bars with two bridges (work that out). Mitchell's approach is almost naive, which can be fresh and appealing, and makes for a pleasant if not groundbreaking release.

Natraj Deccan Dance GALLOPING GOAT GG3424 CD
Mat Maneri, violinist son of Joe, features here on an Indo-jazz fusion date for a Massachusetts label. But the approach is more multicultural than the famous 60s work of Joe Harriott and John Mayer. As with Chris Speed's Pachora, there's a mix of arranged traditional material and originals, though the dirge-like Maneri qualities aren't totally submerged. Self-imposed limitations make for a worthwhile project.

Northwoods Improvisers Lightning Darkness ENTROPY 005 CD
Another contribution to a mini-renaissance of Indo-jazz fusions, this time by a Michigan trio. Northwoods Improvisers are long-time partners Mike Gilmore, Mike Johnson and Nick Ashton. The basic line-up is vibes, bass and drums, but here they're joined on half the tracks by Ben Bracken on percussion and Kirk Lucas on cello and bowed banjo. As with *Spinning* from 1997, jazz based Improv is fused with African and Eastern musics. They also include a gentle, loping interpretation of Sun Ra's "God Is More Than Love Could Ever Be". Mellow and attractive.

Pair 'A Dice Near Vhana NWM 015 CD
An addition to the growing fascination of improvisors with live electronics (see John Butcher and Phil Durrant's excellent duo CD on Wobbly Rail, and Evan Parker with Walter Prati). Altoist Jeffrey Morgan and electronics maestro Joker Nies add a humorous twist to the format (check the punning name and title), with laughter and farting noises on alto as well as electronics. "Scary Nite" sustains an air of foreboding with its rumbling electronics, while "Crey Jets" goes in for aquarium gurgles. Morgan's distinctive work on alto sax favours a high register with a strong line in multiphonics.

Ken Schaphorst Big Band Purple NAXOS JAZZ 860302 CD
Naxos, the budget-price classical label, have turned their hand to jazz, with varying results. This is probably their finest release to date. Schaphorst's adventurous instrumentation and voicings make him a worthy successor to Gil Evans. On the long opening track, "Uprising", Donny McCaslin's tenor takes the lead in a long solo which continues through a bluesy slow section which magically transforms into an exotic 6/8 feel. The same thoughtful and eventful approach is clear throughout the nine compositions. Other soloists include John Medeski on a beautifully greasy Hammond B-3, Uri Caine and Seamus Blake.

The Wild Man's Band Peter Peter Peter Und Johannes NWM 013 CD
That's Peters Brotzmann, Friis Nielsen and Ole Jorgensen, with Johannes Bauer (reeds, bass and drums and trombone respectively). The opening tracks lull you into forgetting the screaming free jazz wildman of *Machine Gun* and Last Exit, and then Brotzmann comes shrieking into "Dead Man's Camp", with Johannes Bauer's trombone lurching into his turbulent slipstream. Brotzmann covers taragato and clarinet as well as tenor saxophone in a varied and satisfying mix of bucolic pieces, dirges and thrashes. □

in brief outer limits

Reviewed by **David Keenan**

Marvin Ayres Cellosphere
RITORNELL 1 CD
The debut release for this new Mille Plateaux 'classical' imprint comes from London cellist Marvin Ayres, and is a series of three meditative electroacoustic compositions. Ayres weaves web-shrouded spaces on violin and cello, sometimes utilising a slight delay. The packaging is as faceless and uninviting as we've come to expect from brainy Europeans, but when the sonics are as poetic and stimulating as this, who cares?

Eugene Chadbourne Country Music Of Southeastern Australia
ENTROPY STEREO RECORDINGS ESR002 CD
Eugene Chadbourne's guitar soloing on this CD issue of a vinyl-only RRR recording is an absolute treat. He subscribes to a higher logic than mere note/chord combinations, and his characteristically shadowy recording quality only serves to heighten the mysterious beauty of his technique. Highlights include a strangely moving "Light My Fire"/"Workingman Blues" and a heavily conceptual tribute to Willie Nelson.

Coil Winter Solstice EP ESKATON 19 CD
Coil's *Solstice* EP series has produced some of their finest and most otherworldly moves yet. The addition of violinist Bill Breeze tilts the concluding *Winter Solstice* disc toward folk ritual trance. "A White Rainbow" perfectly captures a moon-soaked all night vigil, but "Christmas Is Now Drawing Near" is the real treat, an eerily reanimated folk piece very much in the style of Paul Giovanni's *Wicker Man* soundtrack.

Current 93 Calling For Vanished Faces DURTRO 043 2XCD
Current 93 Untitled DURTRO NO NUMBER CD
Calling For Vanished Faces is a fantastic, epoch spanning double CD compilation from the UK's most mysterious and consistently transcendental sound artists. Curated by David Tibet himself, the set runs from their early dark, devotional sound collages through Incredible String Band style psych and melancholic folk to the spare splendour of last year's masterful *Soft Black Stars*. It hangs together beautifully because, as Tibet explains in the sleevenotes, "the themes in the work have remained the same from the beginning: apocalypse in the great and small — the human and the universal: our loss of humanity and innocence." Crucially, such monomania marks off true artistry from mere dabbling. Identified by Louis Wain's beautiful full colour deer painting on the cover, the untitled CD mops up outtakes from *All The Pretty Little Horses* and *Soft Black Stars*, as well as detritus from an aborted Current album. Also included are some extended drone pieces from long time cohort Christoph Heemann and some solo works by guitarist Michael Cashmore.

Dawn Dawn NO MANS LAND MML9825 CD
Dawn is a series of spacious trio improvisations recorded at the Akademie Der Kunste in Berlin. The whole atmosphere is dominated by the monstrous, looming basswork of Johannes Strobl. The way Strobl bends and fires notes leaves huge chunks of silent space in his wake. Kruder & Dorfmeister associate Rupert Huber manipulates low key tapes and atmospheric keyboards, while Hanno Leichtmann uses brushes on cymbals and snares lending a decadent jazz edge.

Empress Homeward Sounds EP
555 RECORDINGS 7"
Opaque BA531/99 DENTAL OPA001 CD
More 'secret music' from the UK's backstreets. Empress, from Leeds, play through loose, semi-structured songs, where guitars are barely plucked and simple, flat notes register, then die. The female vocals — blurred like Polaroids taken from speeding crosscountry trains — are interspersed with thick muggy blocks of cassette sound and street noise.

Opaque, from Lancaster, are considerably more blustery in their attack, conjuring up intense and all-improvised electronic rock caught somewhere between The Magic Band and Borbetomagus. Both self-released records are so geographically specific that they serve as little capsules of late 20th century consciousness, forever preserved.

Étage 34 & Benat Achiary Étage 34 & Benat Achiary
33REVPERMI 9910 CD
For the past 18 years, Soixante Étages have been France's greatest full-on communal trance squad. They specialise in huge, heaving levitations, using basic rock instrumentation without a safety net. Active alongside Soixante since 1994, the power trio offshoot Étage 34 here teams up with veteran French underground vocalist Benat Achiary, who spits and howls like no one else this side of Neubauten's Blixa Bargeld. Given the track lengths, the album might have turned into an endurance test, but thanks to some meaty, hardcore guitar, the energy never flags. *(Biba Kopf)*

Furuholmen/Bjerkestrand/Wadling Hermetic RUNE GRAMMOFON RCD2008 CD
If it's Norway, 80s puke poppers A-Ha can't be far away — the Furuholmen in the credits here is none other than Mags, the A-Ha skateboarder with the curly mullet, now turned painter and film music composer. Commissioned as a soundtrack to a Norwegian film called *Bloody Angels*, *Hermetic*'s atmosphere is convincingly bloody and bleak. Choirs of chanting lost children fade in and out over deep, pulsing electronics, unsettling, twisted 'jazz' and what sounds like Tom Waits tackling "When The Saints Go Marching In".

Repeat Repeat CUT 002/RESET 001 CD
Named in tribute to UK avant rock legends This Heat, Repeat are Toshimaru Nakamura, who has survived previous encounters with Blixa Bargeld and architectonic guitarist Taku Sugimoto, on guitar and electronics, and Jason Kahn, a graduate of minimalist composer Arnold Dreyblatt, on drums and electronics. Like the trio that inspired them, they pile on layers of metal-on-metal percussion, chugging tape loops, real drums and scrawny bodiless guitar in a series of semi-improvised sound snatches, which they organise into hypnotic yet resolute rock blasts.

Spunk Det Eneste Jeg Vet Er At Det Ikke Er En Stovsuger RUNE GRAMMOFON RCD2010 CD
On the same label that released the *Hermetic* disc, reviewed above, comes Spunk, an all-woman free collective who are so spread across the map that they conjure an image that suggests an icily austere No-Neck Blues Band re-recording Spontaneous Music Ensemble's *One, Two, Albert Ayler*. The way they utilise chirping, bubbling brass, high-pitched throat gargling and droning prayer bowls also conjures memories of The LA Free Music Society.

Tactile Borderlands SENTRAX COLLECTORS SERIES SCS01 CD
Tactile are John Everall and Teresa Mills, who specialise in would-be monolithic shots of buzzing static electronics, shot through with whispered high tones. Coil's John Balance provides vocals on the first track, "Grief", with lyrics from a text by visionary Gothic horror writer William Hope Hodgson. Balance's dark intonations beautifully charge the atmosphere of the rest of the CD, without which it wouldn't add up to much more than a selection of fairly diverting dronescapes. There must be a thousand kids who've recorded similar stuff in their bedrooms, only these two are lucky enough to know Coil. It's a limited edition of 500 copies, 131 of which come complete with an original drawing by Mills and are only available by mail order. □

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the compiler

New compilations: reviewed, rated, reviled

Because the Japanese count down their years from the beginning of the incumbent emperor's reign, the 60s came some 20 years late to Japan. Yet in many ways the late-blooming, if somewhat foreshortened Japanese 60s of the Showa era, as documented on a double CD named for the year it ended with Emperor Hirohito's death, ***Showa 64*** (Disorient Sushi 19 2xCD), were also marked by a cultural blooming. Chronicler James P Viner has done a good insider job on tracing the roots of dayglo PoMo types like Pizzicato Five, UFO, Cornelius and their ilk back to the Japanese club-jazz fusions of the somewhat less enlightened mid-70s (Western system), taking in Yellow Magic Orchestra, their comedian pals of The Snakeman Show (whose skits savagely mock Western stereotypes of Japan while simultaneously sniping at the archetypes they're modelled on), Ryuichi Sakamoto, the UK inspired Tokyo Acid Jazz boom and more. It's not all non-stop fun, but it's intriguing stuff nonetheless.

From YMO on, succeeding electronica generations can't resist the hi-tech noise of video games. But ***Blip, Bleep*** (Lucky Kitchen LK003 CD), put together by the New York based post-media operators at Lucky Kitchen, puts a novel spin on the hackneyed video game music comp by inviting a diverse clutch of oddballs and unknowns (including V/VM, Jake Mandell and label partners Suetsu & Underwood) to contribute tracks based on instructions for soundtracks to imaginary video games. Packaged in a handstitched felt wallet, the results are patchy but often highly entertaining. Persevere beyond its numerous misstarters and its quirky illogic becomes strangely endearing: a schizoid space of weird sample graftings, woozy gaming sonics and DIY adventuring.

No less intriguing, ***Family Audio*** (Lucky Kitchen LK003 CD) presents an intimate series of nine sound documentaries, recorded in various fidelities, of family life from around the globe. On this evidence, the Lucky Kitchen label stands for highly eclectic and quirkily individual electronic activity.

Honey balls from heaven, the songs from ***Studio One Showcase Vol 1*** (Heartbeat 11617724 CD) are as sweet as one would expect from the core studio of Jamaican popular song. The brass arrangements and sweeping harmonies of The Heptones' "Love Me Always" adorn such crafted, vibrant soul music that it's easy to see why some people devote the bulk of their listening lives to the label's output. Other performers include Alton Ellis, Cornell Campbell and Johnny Osbourne. All tracks appear — for the first time on CD — in extended disco mix format.

The sequel to the Studio One focused *100% Dynamite*, ***200% Dynamite*** (Soul Jazz SJR40 CD/LP) is Kingston seen through funk-tinted spectacles. It contains material as diverse as Prince Buster's gorgeous "Sit And Wonder" and Tenor Saw's dancehall smash "Ring The Alarm" — riding the all-conquering "Stalag 17" rhythm. The slant of the album is how Jamaican music absorbed US black music: Byron Lee's "Hot Reggae" takes its cue from James Brown's "Hot Pants", Toots's "Funky Kingston" imports Sly Stone, elsewhere, the soul jazz flute 'n' conga fetish figures widely. A provocative and pleasurable grab bag.

To judge from ***10,000 Strong: The Theology Of Rhymes*** (Flo 099 CD), fun doesn't figure too highly on the agenda of the UK brethren of the Nation of Islam. The CD is designed to "give the world an excellent glimpse into the creative genius and beauty of black rap artists in the UK". The urgency and agility of the various rappers' delivery might take on an added poignancy in light of the still unresolved Stephen Lawrence murder case, but too often anger overrides logic, leading some of the raps into spinning the most absurd conspiracy theories. Yet it's all very well dismissing the cold lucidity of, say, Conscious Yoot's "State Of Emergency" as paranoid, but the somewhat dubious Libya-Lockerbie cover-up rhymes aside, their verses amass enough evidence for their paranoia to be diagnosed as justified.

Now here's a novelty from the good people at Law & Auder — girls who know how to turn the light on. Having, er, done it for themselves in soul, rock, Easy Listening and life in general, the sisters are being asked to do it all over again, this time to prove their prowess with machines on ***The Female Of The Species*** (Law & Auder LA13 2xCD). Does the establishing of every (very relatively) new genre mean putting the clock back and fighting old battles already won all over again? Is women's electronica really its own genre, or is this somewhat condescending if undoubtedly well intended set an example of positive discrimination? Politics aside, the 24 featured artists, among them, Apache 61, Kaffe Matthews, Bit-Tonic and People Like Us, produce approximately the same 40-60 ratio of good against crap music common to such compiled undertakings. ☐ *Reviewed by David Howell, Biba Kopf and Will Montgomery*

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label lore

No: 031

Iris Light

Address 55 Hawkens Way, St Columb Major, Cornwall TR9 6SS
Tel/fax 01637 881543
E-mail *iLIGHT@inslight.demon.co.uk*
Web *www.inslight.demon.co.uk*
UK distribution Shellshock
Run by Adam Sykes
Roster includes Blue, Sonic Subjunkies, Fire Escape Fetisch Park, Hoodlum Priest, Aube
Description Fringe music from a variety of genres. digital riot beats, Japanese noise, satirical avant rock, and post-dancefloor electronica
Brief history Iris Light began in 1996, after Sykes relocated from the North of England to Cornwall while working as sound engineer on a film project Previously running an independent record mail order company, he realised he preferred a label manager's role and set up Iris Light to release music that is purely electronic First releases were by Band Of Pain and the quirky eclecticism of Hungarians Széki Kurva; a faxed request to Japanese noise minimalist Aube resulted in *Stared Gleam*, a CD sourced from the sound of a lightbulb, and the label has since grown at Sykes's own pace A sister label, reLIGHT, aims to re-release out of print avant garde classics — he currently has two Aube rarities on file, available via the Iris Light Website
Statement of intent To continue releasing the music that I like and that will be seen as outstanding in the future as it is now
Other activities Simply the release of good music
Future plans Some live events are in the planning stage with Dot TV The broadcast and release of the Sonic Subjunkies' Peel Session The imminent release of former Sabres Of Paradise duo Blue's new mini-album, and also the debut solo album by ex-Meat Beat Manifesto member Jonny Stephens, aka Fire Escape A collaboration between Aube and zoviet*france: some time next year
Choice cuts Sonic Subjunkies *Molotov Lounge*; Various *Marconi Point*

(Info and manifesto: Adam Sykes)

print run

New music books: read, raved about, roughed up

Martin Denny and group

PHOTO MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE

Exotica: Fabricated Soundscapes In A Real World

By David Toop

SERPENT'S TAIL PBK £12 99

"I had curated sound for most of my working life," David Toop writes in the deeply felt introduction to his latest book, referring to the anguish that followed his wife's suicide, "yet music was degraded for me, an irritant now. Recapturing the significance that music had played in my life before this pivotal event seemed impossible. Now I was interested in death and life. Some might have seen this as pretentious and in a sense they were right. My tolerance for trivia had narrowed sharply." To respect the candour and dignity of this opening declaration does not make it any more comfortable to read, nor the pages that follow any less perplexing. Somewhere between the concrete reality of that violent act and the artificial lures and snares conjured up by the book's title, an inescapable wasteland displays itself, without limit or respite. Culture stands revealed as a hideous joke of grotesque proportions. Does anyone feel like laughing yet?

Pace its subtitle, *Exotica* plays fast and loose with all notions of 'fabrication' and 'reality' but not always to any good effect. The vast central section of the book, titled "The Beast Within", has its origins in what Toop describes as a "straightforward" article written for *Collusion* magazine in 1982 on such notable purveyors of exotic musical fictions as Les Baxter, Martin Denny and Arthur Lyman, and which already noted their connections to the early deep space fantasies of Sun Ra and the low budget horror flicks of Roger Corman. But with this new book, Toop rolls back the explored frontiers of the genre until they all but disappear from view. Identities, locations, genres and disciplines are made to crowd tightly together as artists, anthropologists, film makers, novelists, composers and theorists are called upon in bewildering succession. But to what purpose? An argument fails to formulate itself out of this restless accumulation of material. Toop's tolerance for trivia hasn't just narrowed sharply, it also appears to have lost both its appetite for play and sense of direction. While Joseph Conrad, Esquivel, Dick Dale, Paul Gauguin, Josephine Baker, Brian Wilson, Colin McPhee and Maya Deren rub shoulders in the hallway, Toop remains uncertain of what to do with them or where they should ultimately go.

Alongside these real world personalities, a range of fictional characters and fake locations are also introduced into the text, grouped mostly around the opening and closing portions of the book. Toop even finds time for a fairly wordy exchange with canine superstar, Lassie. Such interventions may serve to prove a point, but they also indicate a certain lack of conviction. How unsettling that a book about travel, adventure and highly charged confrontations with the strange doesn't seem to go anywhere. This does not mean that the facts elude him or that his extreme sensitivity as a critical and creative listener have in any way deserted him. Toop has retained his remarkable skills as a music historian. The uncertainty lies in the ambivalence which he demonstrates towards his chosen subject.

Les Baxter

Esquivel

Exotic music appears to be a guilty pleasure for him, one that he can't quite own up to completely. The shameless enthusiasm which only love can bring is missing from his book. Sparks fly but they fail to catch.

Toop is evidently fascinated by such aberrant talents as Baxter, Denny and Lyman. Fascination alone, however, can also be a person's undoing. Too compelling to be mistaken for curiosity, yet not strong enough to pass for a genuine passion, it means you're going to hate yourself in the morning. "Exotica certainly anticipated the utopianism of a world without frontiers," Toop announces towards the end of "The Beast Within", "a global marketplace of glittering miscegenating musics. At its most anodyne, this search for a fantasy Esperanto sucked life out of the world in order to feed its own deathly pallor." Which is what they used to call 'decadence' once upon a time, back when such terms had any meaning or significance.

By naming something one is also able to be rid of it, however, and that's probably the one true and happy joke to be found in Toop's book. For him to speak of degradation implies the continued existence of a fully functioning value system. Similarly, only the truly sensitive can appreciate the effect irritation has upon the senses. Toop brings a genuine vitality to his encounters with Bill Laswell, LA's Samoan rap crew Boo-Yaa Tribe, Henry Cowell's star pupil Burt Bacharach, and a courteous, if sleepy, Ornette Coleman. Moments of unforced pleasure abound, whether it's a description of a heart-stopping late-night car ride with Dutch composer Huib Emmer, a loving and careful exhumation of a strange and obscure single recorded for the Sue label in 1963 by the blues singer JB Lenoir, or the presence of Toop's daughter Juliette, to whom *Exotica* is dedicated. This final affectionate gesture is somewhat qualified, however, by Toop's fatherly concern that she may have been exposed to "more Les Baxter than is good for her future development" during the creation of this book. How much Baxter is that exactly? And what music does he think she should have been listening to? Is Ravel a better influence on a growing mind? Or Hendrix for that matter?

Such questions indicate the point at which Toop and his subject part company. The fact that exotic music might still have an effect beyond his own area of interest is not one which he seems prepared to entertain. For example, Throbbing Gristle and Yellow Magic Orchestra both rate passing mentions, while Combustible Edison and Tokyo techno clubpopper Yoshinori Sunahara do not. Meanwhile, the beat goes on. Dutch hardcore noise-merchants LOOS recently performed an arrangement by Huib Emmer of the Les Baxter classic "Quiet Village". In America, Scamp Records have released new, remastered versions of several key Martin Denny recordings, complete with reproductions of the original artwork, plus highly informative sleeve notes by Denny himself. It remains a world in motion.

KEN HOLLINGS

Evgenie Sokolov
By Serge Gainsbourg
TAM TAM PBK $17

It is axiomatic that an emperor rarely wears old clothes. Yet mouldy figs forever carp that our own cultural emperors wear nought but new threads. To the figs, free improvisation or the heavy use of electronics or even playing away from standard Western pitch is evidence of naked sloth. To which we can only reply (in the eloquent words of Jimi Hendrix), "Woof, woof, blah, blah."

The late French renaissance man, Serge Gainsbourg, was one cultural emperor who didn't give a rat's ass whether or not the establishment considered him talented. Gainsbourg understood the implicit nature of art in a post-Duchamp universe. As a creator, he created. If he did so while functioning as an artist, he created art. The fact that Serge often appeared (especially to non-French eyes) as little more than a poorly kempt mumbler did not impinge on his view of himself as a great artist and provocateur. The recent interest in Gainsbourg's recordings (spurred by Mick Harvey, Luna and others) bears out his opinion. Now that he is safely dead, Gainsbourg is becoming internationally acknowledged as one of the few keepers of France's art flame in the late 20th century.

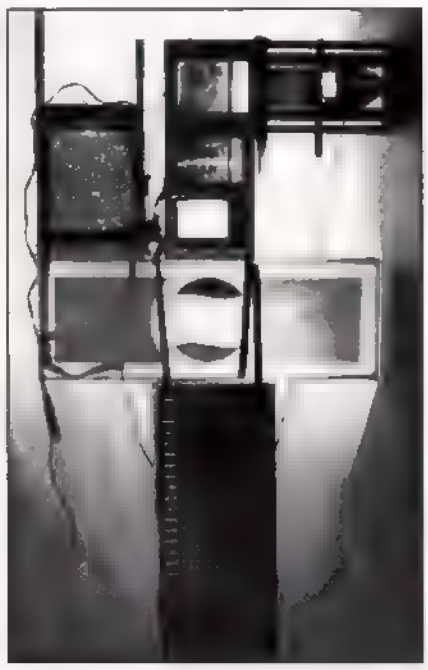
Gainsbourg's *Evgenie Sokolov* first appeared in 1980. It is, most simply, a novella about flatulence. Gainsbourg's contemporaneous musical release of the same name consisted, appropriately, of fart sounds accompanied by reggae rhythms. Neither of these items was designed to be particularly fig friendly. It tells the story of a young painter whose bowels are in a constant uproar. Sokolov's condition causes him no end of grief until, in an epiphanic moment, he discovers how to harness his gas in the service of his art. Sokolov's rise through the art world, his battles with critics, and the evolution of his technique comprise the rest of the text. Both lyrically sophomoric and intellectually engaging, Gainsbourg's only known book is a written parallel to his musical work. It pushes against acceptable boundaries of taste, while making it clear that the author finds such niceties both artificial and inane. What shines through, beyond this, is Gainsbourg's delight in the process of production and the emergence of the final product itself. It's apparent that he has internalised Duke Ellington's dictum, "If it sounds good, it *is* good." And any artist who takes this instinctual route can be assured of a modicum of satisfaction, outside the strictures of externally applied aesthetic criteria. This liberating stance is also one that many of our more tight-assed squares (and even hipsters) might do well to consider. Perhaps if Ebba Jahn had read this story before making his 1984 film *Rising Tones Cross*, he wouldn't have been so automatically dismissive of John Zorn's noisemaking antics. He could have just laid back and enjoyed the noise for what it was: fun.

If you are neither a mouldy fig nor an uptight intellectual, you'll probably dig this funny, smutty little book. And if you *are* either one of those, man, you *need* it.

BYRON COLEY

Serge Gainsbourg

PHOTOS: LES BAXTER: SWINGTIME ARCHIVE; SERGE GAINSBOURG: JEAN PIERRE LELOIR/REDFERNS



100,000 Watts Of Fat City

By Alan Vega

ANNA POLERICA PBK 300FF

"In my things there's another kind of illusion," murmurs Alan Vega in the introduction to this monograph of his light sculptures (see the image above for an example), "the whole idea of light and the whole mystical th ng. what is it? protons, electrons Ask God!" We tried, Alan but His line was dead. Besides, we'd rather hear it from you "It's mysterious, isn't it? That's why I work with it, man"

As Suicide's vocalist, Vega may rumble through sentences like a hopped-up war veteran ripping through garbage sacks in search of enlightenment, but his immensely articulate commentaries on his lesser known art career — the earliest works here date back to 1969 — are not only illuminating of his candid approach to turning street junk into gallery exhibits and the impoverished conditions he was too frequently reduced to; they incidentally tell more about NYC than any number of Martin Scorsese movies. What emerges from the wrongly presumed wreckage of his life is a series of sculptures that simultaneously satirise and pay tribute to American iconography: Marilyn Monroe pinned up inside a crucifix-shaped neon twist; a (more straightforward) homage to Iggy Pop etc.

His relationship to the art world is remarkably down to earth: after failing to sell anything by one exhibition's close, much to the horror of the gallery owners he puts his exhibits out with the trash. Why not? he argues. After all, out of garbage they were created and to garbage they will return. In art terms, his work falls somewhere between Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ* and the sculptures of Edward Kienholz. But, just as in music, Alan Vega is ultimately his own category

BIBA KOPF

Available by mail order from Anna Polerica, tel: 00 33 4 68 54 64 44, e-mail: anna.polerica@wanadoo.fr, Web: perso.wanadoo.fr/anna.polerica/

Land Of A Thousand Dances: Chicano Rock 'N' Roll From Southern California

By David Reyes & Tom Waldman

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO PRESS HBK £18

In the early 80s, a compilation called *The History Of Latino Rock* appeared on LA's Zyanya label. A labour of love, it sought proper recognition for the musicians who inspired romance and racial pride in a generation of Mexican-American teenagers growing up on LA's East Side during the Eisenhower and Kennedy eras. Some, like Ritchie Valens, broke out of the neighbourhood with singles like "La Bamba" and won an early form of pop stardom, while others would play out their entire careers at neighbourhood dances, their records unknown outside East LA

The compilation was curated in part by two fans whose longstanding fondness for the hybrids created when Latin rhythms met R&B ultimately gave rise to *Land Of A Thousand Dances*, which purports to trace the Latino rock scene through four decades of evolution. Its title recalls another freak national hit, the barrio anthem co-written by Fats Domino and recorded by Cannibal And The Headhunters, which out-performed any Chicano single before it. *Land* is energised by the exploits of Cannibal and his cohorts. Indeed, it is at its best describing a time when groups like Thee Midnighters and The Blendells walked the earth, when a two song set could make for an entire even ng's entertainment on the backyard party circuit, and when fortune could suddenly smile and transport a group like Cannibal And The Headhunters from high school dances to an opening slot for The Beatles at the Hollywood Bowl (Cannibal tore his pants at that gig, upsetting Brian Epstein, or so we are told.)

Because Frank Zappa grew up in the desert east of LA amid Chicano kids, Waldman and Reyes make much of his affection for their music. In glib prose typical of the book, they write "until the day he died [Zappa] never lost his teenage love for blues and ballads. " Oh yeah? The Mothers' 1967 concept album based on the work of a then-fictitious group, *Ruben & The Jets*, was described in Zappa's sleevenotes as comprising "greasy love songs and cretin simplicity" And one *Ruben* contributor, the Little Feat guitarist Lowell George, maintained that Zappa thought Chicano music laughable. Whatever, Reyes and Waldman appear to be unaware of this album, making no reference to it when writing about a group who became Ruben And The Jets and released two 70s albums as production clients of Zappa's

Ruben Guevara fronted this doubtless more sincere edition of The Jets. The 'real' Ruben is an interesting East Side polymath. As co-compiler of *The History Of Latino Rock*, he might have written a much better book himself. But in retrospect his impact on the East LA scene is negligible, compared to that of Lil' Julian Herrera in the 50s. Though Herrera is namechecked here as the East Side's first pop star, his story goes untold. An incandescent, troubled talent, he vanished in the early 70s, leaving his fans to wonder if he was dead or hiding out across the border in Tijuana, one step ahead of a deal gone wrong. In *Land* he merits four brief mentions, and Chan Romero, whose "Hippy, Hippy Shake" galvanised 60s audiences in the barrio and the UK alike, gets but two. The authors do much better by Jimi Hendrix.

There are several, more mundane gaffes. They misspell Patti Smith and Johnnie Ray, and Chicana (!) punk rocker Alice Armendariz (aka Alice Bag). Another set of East Side punkers, The Plugz, not only have their first album mistitled (it should read *Electrify Me*), but Reyes and Waldman locate this Sex Pistols era release in the early 1980s — a great disservice to the first studio album to come out of LA's punk scene. Other Chicano groups ignored in the chapter disingenuously titled "Thank God For Punk!" (the authors seem to have little authentic feeling for the genre) include The Skulls and The Zeroes. The latter was a group of 14 year olds, one of whom became El Vez, the marvellous satiric rocker of the 90s. He is also AWOL, as are Ozomatli, an unreal oversight given that they threaten to become the barrio's most successful musical export to date

Unfortunately, Reyes and Waldman seem to believe that enthusiasm alone can create the definitive work on their beloved barrio music. Instead, an ungainly prose style and slipshod reporting make for a book whose shortcomings will surely disappoint Latin rock enthusiasts.

Garage groups, low rider car clubs, a stadium full of dancing teenagers with a Spanglish lingo all their own: Chicano rock music generated a culture of vibrancy and feral energy. Not that you can tell from the scene chronicled in these pages. If it had better balanced fun with scholarship, it might have occupied the middle ground between Manuel Peña's *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto* and Fowler and Crawford's *Border Radio*.

RICHARD HENDERSON

Shibboleth: My Revolting Life

By Penny Rimbaud aka JJ Ratter

AK PRESS PBK £6.95

Is it conceivable that a man in his mid-thirties, who was born with the surname Ratter, could have been a more significant figure in the convoluted genealogy of punk rock than the youthful firebrand who took the name Rotten? Well, as a member of the Crass collective, Ratter can rightfully claim to have been a considerable, not to mention continuing influence on the recrudescent Peace Movement, on anti-road protestors, on animal rights groups, etc, in addition to inspiring musicians, artists, and scratch videomakers. As for Rotten, his influence barely extends beyond the Paris catwalks these days.

But according to the official punk histories, Ratter aka Rimbaud barely rates a footnote. His group Crass are ignored by academic treatise and, more damagingly and most unfairly, by Jon Savage's *England's Dreaming* and Greil Marcus's *Lipstick Traces*. That the pair of them can purport to trace punk's radical roots, from free spirit heresies through to the Situationist International, while overlooking what was arguably punk's most radical manifestation, renders their authoritative tone somewhat laughable

The primary focus of Rimbaud's autobiography is not specifically concerned with Crass, however. Naturally, his disarmingly candid book devotes several chapters to the group, giving it a prominent place within the context of a life both colourful and turbulent. The critical event in Rimbaud's conversion to punk was the anti-Statism engendered by the death of his friend, Phil Russell (aka Wally Hope). Rimbaud believes emphatically that Russell was murdered by the State as a consequence of his involvement with the Free Festival Movement of the early 70s. Either he was killed by the the side effects of drugs forced on him during incarceration in a psychiatric institution or he was slain by nocturnal visitors, Rimbaud claims. Whatever the facts of the case, Hope's death had an extremely profound effect on Rimbaud: the naive idealism of his free festival activism was thereafter replaced by fierce antinomianism

Some parts of this book have been published previously in various Crass booklets, but anyone interested in that group's fierce commitment to political pranksterism, anarchist thrash, savage photomontage and polemical rant will find the material dealing with Rimbaud's pre-Crass projects to be especially illuminating in context of Crass's cut-up tape experiments and their forays into noise. Here's Rimbaud describing the early 70s avant garde collective, Exit: "Lasting upwards of three hours, and sometimes downwards for the next three, our performances were unstructured affairs that effectively mirrored the nature of our life." In spite of a thinly veiled contempt for the art world and its concomitant pretensions, the Crass collective nevertheless produced some highly innovative and creative work across a number of disciplines. Gee's sometimes harrowing photomontages and paintings deserve wider recognition, Mick Duffield pioneered scratch video, and musically Crass still exert an influence on leftfield musicians

For instance, Joe Bank's Disinformation project pays due tribute to the group on its recent CD, *Al-Jabr*

Rimbaud neglects to mention those other groups who found a temporary home on Crass Records, among them such unlikely allies as Current 93 (whose early records feature Crass members and associates). However, he does detail the various acts of cultural terrorism perpetrated by Crass. For instance, the Thatchergate Tapes, on which they spliced the voices of Thatcher and Reagan to create the illusion of a phone conversation plotting nuclear strikes. The tape fooled *The Times* into thinking it had been manufactured by the KGB

Naturally Crass were rarely short of media attention, as Rimbaud's book playfully documents, but most of it was for their anti-Falklands War songs, or their purportedly blasphemous or obscene records. Meanwhile, their true cultural significance was ignored by the music and mainstream press alike. But the facts speak for themselves. Crass sold more than two million records worldwide on their own label and widely disseminated all manner of subversive material. Most important of all, Crass — the group, the label, the politics and the music — inspired countless numbers of people around the world to make meaningful art and live their lives without compromise

JOHN EVERAL

Penny Rimbaud

'zines

Biba Kopf flicks through music's small press

***Dddd*: Final Issue**

So farewell then, *Dddd*. We haven't always seen eye to eye, but the cover announcement that you're calling it a day sure brought a tear to ours. It was the last A4 type 'n' paste 'zine worth seeking out for its witty, if messy rambling, ranting, raging and, above all, enthused writing. If it was beginning to hate with even more passion than it loved, it was nowhere near so intolerant as Simon H and crew made out. Their range of enthusiasms here runs from cassette and fanzine culture through Luther Vandross and Easy Listening to Digital Hardcore and Klaus Dinger. En route it randomly swats Tzadik swotdiscs by the likes of Fred Frith, Norman Yamada and Tetsu Inoue: "Has Fred Frith ever been involved in a decent piece of music? Never heard it if he has. Bill Laswell — ditto." *Marleys Outpourings Inc, Minstead, Lyndhurst, Hants, SO43 7FY (£1)*

***Fringecore* #7**

A bimonthly published out of Belgium, *Fringecore* is a handsomely produced glossy that bills itself as "a journal of the cultural fringe and the weird". If you can get beyond the "beyond transgression" cover strapline without yawning, you'll find a stimulating 'zine stuffed with Q&As and speculations with and about, among others, Kodwo Eshun and his sonotronic manifesto, Alexander Shulgin on the future of psychedelics and "The Theory Of Xenomorphosis" by film maker Nick Zedd. Plus Asian erotica, the death of Negativland, CD and film reviews, and more. *PO Box 165, 2600 Berchem 1, Belgium (£2.85)*

***Popwatch* #10**

The full colour comic book cover art of *Popwatch* might spell geek culture (not a putdown, at least not for us geeks), but the contents are far more varied than many carney sideshow freakzines coming out of America. In fact, #10 has a heavy New Zealand bias, including an interview with Tall Dwarfs. There's also a lengthy, lavishly illustrated Robert Wyatt interview, plus Alan Licht, The Frogs, and an extensive and informative reviews section. *PO Box 440215, Somerville, MA 02144, USA ($3.95)*

***Resonance* Vol 7 #1**

A belated mention for the most recent issue of the official house organ of the London Musicians' Collective, mostly written by musicians (and boy, does it — no, I didn't mean that). It would be fair to say, however, that the editorial content prides itself on its level-headed dryness, though if it's all-in wrestling you're after, there's a nice scrap brewing between Evan Parker and his growing number of bêtes noires on the letters page. For more seriously good stuff, read La Monte Young's interview with Morton Feldman, plus interviews with Terry Riley, Pauline Oliveros, Charlemagne Palestine and Jim O'Rourke. There's also Chris Cutler on The Forgotten East, reviews, and a free CD. *LMC, 3.6 Lafone House, 11-13 Leathermarket Street, London SE1 3HN (£7)*

***Rubberneck* #28**

This latest issue of *Wire* contributor Chris Blackford's A5 journal reflects his growing interest in film music. Soundtrack composers Leonard Rosenman, Jerry Goldsmith and Rene Lussier are discussed, while the German silent classic *The Golem* and the Brothers Quay film *Institute Benjamenta* are re-viewed. Features include Barry Guy, and Simon H Fell's fourth report on the composition of improvised music. Plus the usual sound reviews section. *21 Denham Drive Basingstoke, Hampshire RG22 6LT (free)*

***The Sound Projector* #5**

Edited by Ed Pinsent, whose reviews in *Resonance* cause Evan Parker so much heartache (see above), you might expect his own *Sound Projector* to be far more scurrilous than the engaged and engaging, broadranging music digest it is in reality. Charlemagne Palestine, Chris Watson, Simon Fell and Merzbow are interviewed, monolithic music (Die Krupps, Death In June, etc) is investigated. Noise, Improv, cosmic guff, free jazz and more are all covered. *BM Indefinite, London WC1N 3XX (£3.75)*

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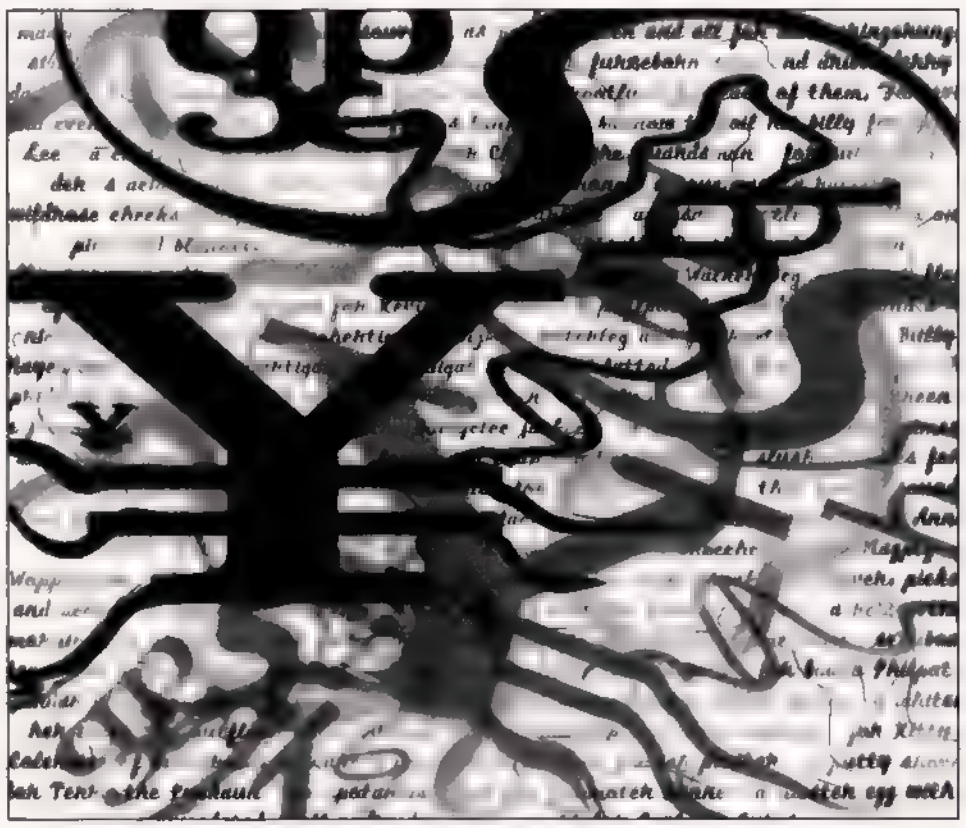
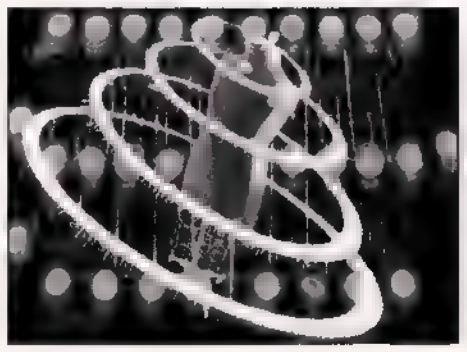
multi media

Akira Rabelais proves music software isn't just for nerds. By Rob Young



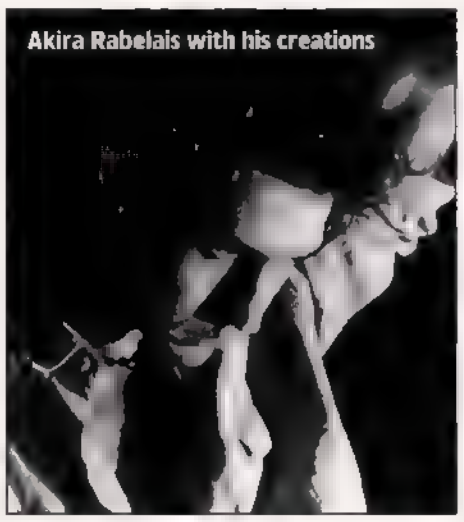


"I'm a composer writing software, not an engineer making music," says digital media artist and software creator Akira Rabelais. A Renaissance person dwelling in Los Angeles, since 1990 Rabelais has been coding sound and graphic software, and recording his own music, while doing time in West Coast educational institutions under the wing of electroacoustic fathers like Tom Erbe and Larry Polansky. The fruit of this schooling has been a 'family' of software programs that he has authored for transforming sound, images and computer file names in patterns of which the outcomes are seldom predictable. His sound tool, Argeïphontes Lyre (AL), is a firm favourite of conceptual electronica producers such as Terre Thaemlitz and Scanner, who use it to effect disorientating shifts, mesmerising merges, and knotted splicings between different samples. The software, freely available for download at Rabelais's Website, is structured like no other: during operation, poetic texts and aphorisms are liable to pop up, and a keystroke exists to throw an instant *I Ching* hexagram in case the creative juices need an extra squeeze. The software architecture takes on the mantle of the labyrinthine fictions of Jorge Luis Borges, and it's no surprise to find Rabelais's Internet homepage is peppered with extracts and short stories from his favourite magic realist writers, including Borges, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Bruno Schultz. After years of nerd-dom, the twilight world of software programming is slowly being colonised by more artistic sensibilities.

But in the world of 21st century vapourware, even aesthetes need to know their maths. Argeïphontes Lyre's backbone functions are Dynamic FM Synthesis, Time Domain Mutation, Morphological Disintegration and the Eviscerator Reanimator, but as Rabelais explains, "That really doesn't say very much. A friend of mine who was recently at IRCAM said that AL was accused of not being functional. Sure, there's nothing functional about trying to bake a chicken in a cheese slicer or a cocktail shaker, but the French will try anything the wrong way. AL is not a general purpose utility. I use it for adding subtle nuances of distortion to audio. I got the idea for Eviscerator Reanimator in a graphic design class. Someone did an animation of a blender chewing up text and spitting out words. I nearly jumped out of my seat. I thought, 'Holy shit, I've got to do that to sound'. But there was no easy way, so after a lot of cursing, I wrote an application to do it."

The godfathers of this disembodied music — that begins and ends in the airless environment of a computer hard disk — are the American computer music pioneers Max Mathews, who worked out how to write a primitive set of operations for processing sound on the gigantic, unwieldy mainframe at Bell Labs (Bell Telephone Laboratories) in 1957, and Charles Dodge, author of *Computer Music*, one of the first serious studies of digital sound. "I met Max Mathews at a party in 1993," recalls Rabelais, "and was able to have a long talk with him about his early work at Bell Labs, how he 'accidentally' got involved in music, and about what he would and wouldn't do again. I think Max and Charles don't have big reputations outside academia because they've never learned to properly apply their lipstick."

Rabelais's software acts as a drill-bit for scooping out labyrinthine sonic fictions. "I'd love to see a word processor written by



Akira Rabelais with his creations

Marquez or Pablo Neruda," he declares, when asked about the magic realist element of his constructions. "How about an e-mail application by ee cummings — how would that work? I think the soul of digital media lies in creating and interacting with the plasticity of information, so my software is about 'shapeshifts' and transmutations..."

Hence AL's prime component, Time Domain Mutation. Based on Tom Erbe's more commonly used SoundHack mutation program (*ftp://music.calarts.edu/pub/SoundHack/*), and Larry Polansky's various utilities for imaginitively crossfading two different sound files into one, Rabelais's program takes a source sound and a target sound, thunks one into the other according to a process whose variables can be set by the user, and out comes a third, 'mutant' sound file. "Consider two sandwiches," he clarifies, "a grilled jalapeno and tofu on wheat, and a peanut butter and jelly on rye. If you wanted to apply a mutation algorithm to the sandwiches, you would first select one as the source — let's say the jalapeno — and the other — the peanut butter — as the target. Now start analysing the sandwiches: you get a hot and squishy bit from the source and a sweet sticky bit from the target. Depending on the type of mutation you're using, you might come up with something like hot-sticky or squishy-sweet. That new bit could end up in your new sandwich — the resultant mutant — or it might not, because there is a certain amount of random chance in the process. 'Time domain' means that we're looking at and describing the sandwiches as they occur in time, rather than the frequency domain." The scores of different mutation functions Rabelais bundles into the program indeed sound like entries in a tome in one of Borges's infinite libraries of possibility. For example: Arachibutyrophobia — "the fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of your mouth", Horripilating — "bristling, goose bumps, shuddering", Peened — "beaten thin with a hammer".

Rabelais has collected his own electronic compositions on *Elongated Pentagonal Pyramid*, a self-produced, limited edition CD, where he gingerly teases out the tissues of surface noise in similar vein to the likes of Terre Thaemlitz, Achim Wollscheid and Mego's Rehberg & Bauer. But simply because he insists on placing individual clarity of vision at the centre of the creative process, rather than being enslaved and driven by the technological toys and tools of the day, he will always remain at a liberating remove from any definable 'scene'. "Every day I'm still that six year old little boy on a ranch in South Texas," he says, referring to photos from his childhood reproduced on the homepage that he treats as a personal scrapbook: "nailing metal plates on a fence and shooting them with a BB gun to hear what kind of ring they make. I think computers are still in an inceptive stage of development just because we still make a big deal about them. A thousand years ago, being able to read and write might have been a point of distinction — writing is an amazing technology, but who creamed the last time you signed your name? If someone wants your signature, I'm sure it's for who you are or what you represent, not because you can operate a pencil. The only worthwhile transformations are the ones that occur in ourselves." ☐ *Argeïphontes Lyre is available free from Akira Rabelais's Website:* shoko.calarts.edu/~akira

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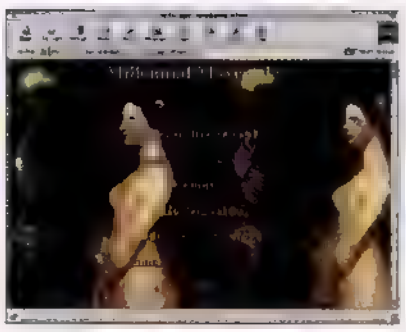


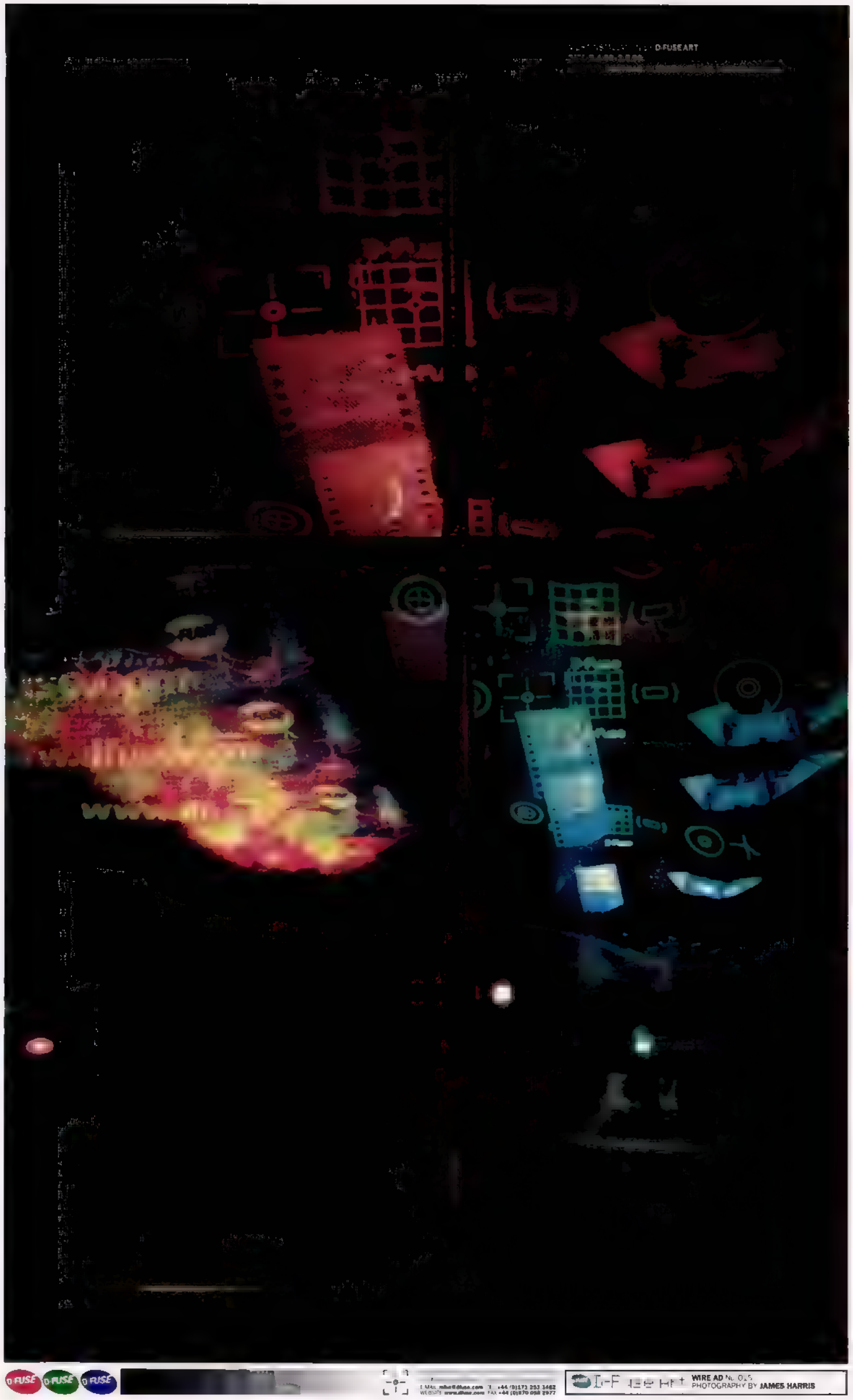
Rubberneck
www.users globalnet.co.uk/ ~rneckmag

Wire contributor Chris Blackford has been editing and distributing the free magazine *Rubberneck* since 1985, and his informed articles, record reviews, and interviews with leading free improvisors, contemporary composers and sound sculptors have amassed into a definitive yet highly personal canon of work over the past 14 years This site lists the contents of all editions to date, and provides many of the original articles online, as well as details of *Rubberneck* 'Special Editions', such as the issues dedicated to UK jazz outsider Joe Harriott, or new fiction The site also hosts a list of features on "Millennial Mavericks" — Robert Ashley, artist Helen Chadwick, animator Jan Svankmeyer, Third Ear Band, an evocative memoir of the late John Stevens during his time with The Spontaneous Music Ensemble, plus a tribute to Blackford's latest obsession, the Renaissance polyphony of Carlo Gesualdo

The Sound Of Berlin
www snafu.de/~circonium

To reflect the tight, minimal, brushed-metal Techno flowing from Berlin's Hard Wax cluster of labels this site keeps things terse and dark – gloomy photos of cityscapes and deep blue and black backgrounds enforce the sobriety inherent in the morphing sonics inspired by Basic Channe Chain Reaction, Rhythm & Sound, *et al* The Circonium site holds discographies of the above labels, plus those of the newer breed Din, Monolake's Imbalance and ML/I, Thomas Brinkmann's Max and Ernst, plus press articles (some in German) and interviews with the like of Vainqueur, Maurizio, Pole and more Best of all, there are plenty of RealAudio samples of tracks a good move cons der ng that many of the vinyl releases mentioned here are only available in editions of a couple of hundred

ROB YOUNG



on location

Going live: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh

The members of Can go solo in Cologne

CAN PHOTOS PHILIP JETHEN

Can

Germany Cologne Paladium

During their heyday in the mid-70s, Can put great emphasis on the subjugation of the individual to the sound of the group At their best the formidable force of five egos were sublimated to a muscular trance music of terrifying density It is ironic, then, that 30 years on, four founding members, Holger Czukay, Michael Karoli, Irmin Schmidt and Jaki Liebezeit should return to Cologne under the Can banner without sharing a stage together

Just the notion of the Godfathers of Krautrock gathered together in this converted factory on the south side of the city was sufficient to generate a tangible sense of electricity in a capacity crowd And when Damo Suzuki turned up to join first Karoli and then Liebezeit, it sent a power surge through the crowd that rattled the hall's black metal rafters With all due respect to Mark E Smith, the Japanese singer was never the most significant Can member, but his extemporised, glissando vocals epitomised their classic albums *Tago Mago* and *Future Days*

The age range of the audience was testament to the group's timelessness What with their black leather and abundant hair the 60s survivors among them were not so much reliving their youth as reluctant to leave it behind On the other hand, many present tonight were not even born when Can last performed together, back in 1977 Not only did Can's troubled rhythms and nightmare cascades of electronic noise provide a bridge between the experimentation of the 60s and the noise nihilism of punk, the way they pitted the organic rock group against the forces of electronica still sounds contemporary The living music rather than nostalgia is tonight's drawcard

However, if the crowd came expecting one of Can's full on noise assaults then they would have been disappointed by Holger Czukay's opening piece Indeed many seemed a trifle bemused by his Ambient conjunction of hoary sounding electronics with computer enhanced images According to his wife and collaborator U-She it was originally composed as an art gallery presentation A crowded hall certainly wasn't the best place to appreciate its intricate visuals but when you could glimpse the graphics flickering across the screen in perfect synchronicity, the effect was quite hypnotic Musically it resembled his and David Sylvian's mid-80s album *Alchemy An Index Of Possibilities*

Twice the mood was pierced by U-She's emergence in a futuristic cocktail dress With the disturbing clarity of a David Lynch siren, she performed her own song, "Time And Tide", and a devastating version of The Velvet Underground's "Sunday Morning"

Those hoping for something more recognisably Can got it with Michael Karoli's set Resplendent in black Daffy Duck T-shirt and playing guitar and electric violin, Karoli led a conventional rock quartet through a set of Can-styled sculptured noise Despite their youth, his group looked and sounded like a timewarp When Suzuki joined them, to gales of applause, the impression was complete

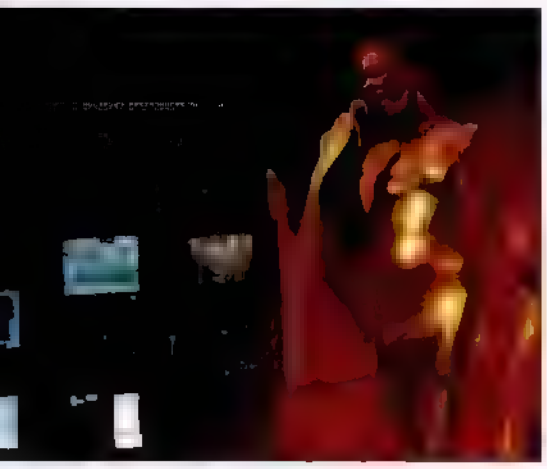
Theater recordings on the live double CD in the recently issued *Can Box* (also containing a video and an interview book) reveal that the group were not always so

impeccably timeless. In particular, Karoli's doodling solos imply that he wasn't entirely immune from rock guitarist vanities. But in Cologne Karoli showed he had rediscovered the spare and textural playing that characterised his best Can work.

If Karoli's set was about continuity, Irmin Schmidt's set-up symbolised the trans-generational appeal of Can's music. He was joined by Liverpool-born DJ Kumo, who is apparently the boyfriend of his daughter (they all live in the same house). Their understanding extended to the stage, where Kumo created precise rhythmic backdrops for Schmidt to interface with.

The sampler has empowered Schmidt, already the most percussive of keyboard players — to expand his percussive range into a gleeful cataclysm of smashing glass and crashing rocks. Leaving the hard labour to the technology, Schmidt moved over to an acoustic piano, which he attacked with the exhilarating force of Cecil Taylor. One piece built to a crescendo of quite staggering intensity, with Schmidt hammering out a dervish melody while Kumo grinned like a crocodile as he signalled yet another raise in tempo.

Czukay, Karoli and Schmidt were the battling egos of the original Can; Jaki Liebezeit's drums were the group's cohesive force. The former free jazz drummer would create rhythms resonant with the heartbeat, and then quicken the



pulse to the point where anxiety changed into excitement. His set began pleasantly enough. Combining electronic dance music and a technological slide guitar, his bass drum-less rhythms began working their intricate, hypnotic patterns. As ever, his music was more about stealth than flash. His languid beats built up a throbbing intensity without anybody noticing the point of transition. But you definitely felt the change. Then Damo Suzuki reappeared and we were back in Can's realm of beautiful nightmares.

The effectiveness of Liebezeit's rhythmic seductions won him a series of encores, but the voiceless hope that he might be joined by Karoli, Schmidt and Czukay went unfulfilled. For all the evening's thrills and diversity, large sections of the audience seemed to feel that the hole left by Can was still greater than the sum of the parts.

DON WATSON

MELTDOWN PHOTOS: SIMON LEIGH

Daniel Miller's Mini-Meltdown

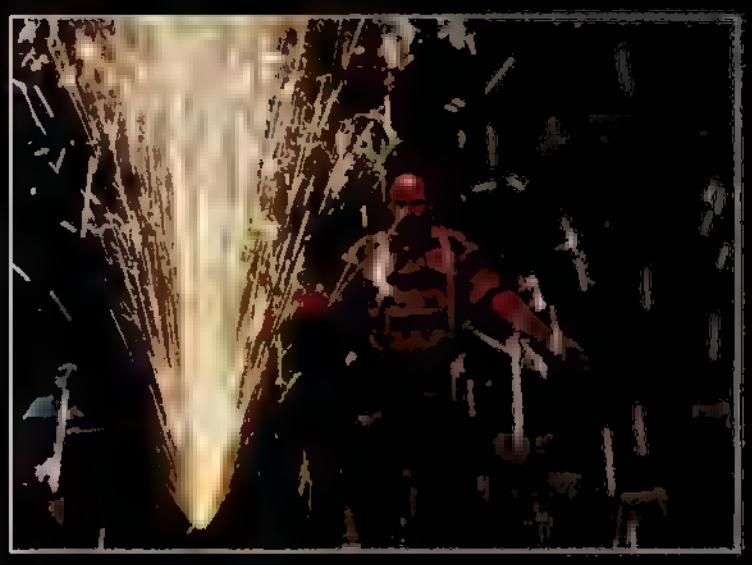
UK, London Queen Elizabeth Hall

Curated by Mute label boss Daniel Miller, this event, a sideline to the South Bank Centre's annual Meltdown summer festival, embraced electronica, post-rock, a live soundtrack performance, Krautrock and al fresco Techno. It was inevitably uneven, but with more hits than misses. The first night's main event was a semi-improvised soundtrack led by Barry Adamson. The performers were a motley crew: Nick Cave, Pan Sonic, Add N To X, Simon Fisher Turner and Russian clarinettist and electronic musician Andrei Samsonov. Adamson guided from the front. The film was a revelation — *A Page Of Madness*, Teinosuke Kinugasa's 1920s Japanese Expressionist silent. It exploded in a turbulent succession of images on themes of incarceration and madness, and was filled with technically dazzling, hallucinatory effects. The dominant mood was anguish punctuated with shocking moments of tranquillity. But with no subtitles, and at 70 minutes, the film was too long to concentrate on, when projected above a half-lit stage containing the above mentioned musicians.

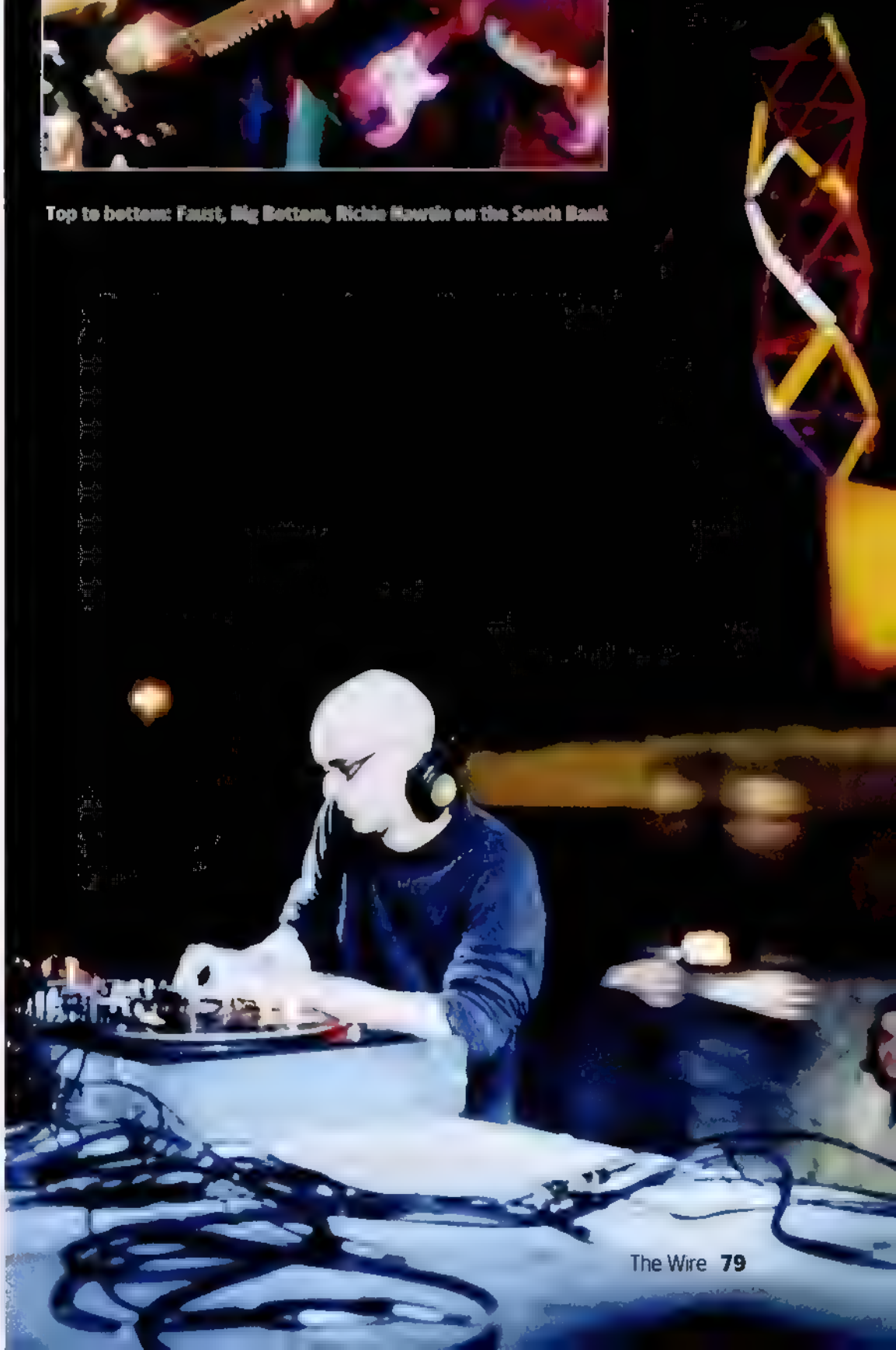
At first it seemed to work. Adamson brought the musicians in cautiously and held back for a long time from the inevitable — and undeniably rousing — cacophony. However, if Adamson had mapped a structure for the performance, it did not assert itself. The music was plagued by a tedious rising four-note bassline, while Adamson's own brief bass forays were ponderous and out of tune. What really fouled things up, though, was the deployment of *three* theremins.

A cardigan-wearing Nick Cave accompanied himself on piano, bookending the piece with a surprisingly affecting ballad of insanity. He seems immune to the pitfalls of self-parody, even with lines like *"There is a place/I know it well/Some call it heaven/But I call it hell"*. In the end, it was an accomplishment to get such a diverse collective playing well together, and there were some great moments, but it was a relief when the final credits rolled.

The first evening had opened with a lengthy documentary on Can, in which it was observed that Jaki Liebezeit could out-machine any rhythm machine. It was a central theme of the second night's action: the three young German groups who opened the evening all had extraordinary drummers working alongside pre-programmed rhythms. That was the best that could be said of Console, a tight but frothy combo with a penchant for 1980s synth pop. Clever but lightweight. Next on were Kreidler, complete with geek-chic stagewear. They immediately ran into technical difficulties, and it took them some time to warm (if warm is the right word) to their task. But when they began to gel they turned in an engrossing series of bright, glancing instrumentals. This was in spite of the difficulties experienced by the new bass player, playing along with programmed bass riffs, who suffered greatly from murky sound.



Top to bottom: Faust, Big Bottom, Richie Hawtin on the South Bank



FM Einheit with Pan Sonic

My sympathies were with the new boy, because the best thing about Kreidler's music used to be the work of former bassist Stefan Schneider, who left the group at the end of last year to concentrate on his other interest, To Rococo Rot, also appearing tonight. Where Kreidler's capacious music digests aspects of dance music, To Rococo Rot wear its influence on their sleeves: their music is repetitive and apt to drift into tranced loops. The songs ebbed and flowed gracefully without managing to occupy the same strange no man's land of poised awkwardness that Kreidler reach. Both groups were hugely popular — evidently, not everyone was there for the Faust experience.

The Krautrock veterans started off impressively enough, with the group playing a propulsive rhythmic piece in darkness behind a screen of gauze. As soon as it was raised, the lights seemed to pick out percussionist Zappi Diermaier, paunchy and resplendent in a tight red, green and gold T-shirt with marijuana motifs, as the centre of attention. The driving pulses he set up on his peculiar battery of percussion instruments dominated the proceedings. There were also more reflective moments, with the keyboards to the fore, in which regions of strange, Sun Ra-like tonalities were explored. There were bad moments aplenty too: none worse when Zappi took a sledgehammer to a TV set. But such bankrupt gestures and schreckliche vocalising didn't entirely ruin the show. The audience at the front flinched at the stage flares, but this was the South Bank and a major conflagration was not on the cards.

The last night attempted to shrug off the weight of the institution and find new uses for the space, billing itself as "a rooftop dance adventure that no club night dare offer". That meant a knot of well wrapped up people huddled on the roof of the Queen Elizabeth Hall drinking nasty beer from plastic glasses. Big Bottom are a bass playing five piece run by Susan Stenger, formerly of Band Of Susans. Their art rock rifferama came and went uneventfully. Next up were Pan Sonic, appearing with ex-Neubauten man-mountain FM Einheit, who beat metal solidly. Einheit added a different rhythmic edge to the crackling electric blast of the Finns, but neither added nor detracted from the rasping sensuality of the sound drifting out into the Thames air.

The final turn was Richie Hawtin. The crowd suddenly doubled in size and invaded the stage. Hawtin's set was completely different from the rhapsodic experimental turntablism of his set at Scratch last year. This was far more conventional Techno, but Hawtin is a genius at pacing, cranking and easing the tension to give the music a sublimely pulsing ebb and flow. No one appeared to pay any attention to the film projected behind him. I've never seen so many people dancing in coats. Then suddenly it was over. It was past midnight and ushers came out of the sky to send everyone home. This is England after all, and the night is for sleeping.

WILL MONTGOMERY

PHOTOS: SIMON LEIGH

Nick Cave

Nick Cave
UK: London Royal Festival Hall

Between the thick phlegmy 70s and the fixed smile of E culture, we're now told, there was nothing but eye make-up and synthpop: kitsch, coke and Euro-karaoke. Although the early 80s may indeed have been a deadening time to live through (and many of us took refuge in even more deadening escape routes), retrospection shows that certain roots were laid down then which are only now beginning to flower.

Camden, North London, 15 plus years ago, and The Birthday Party have just flamed out onstage for a last time. In an aftershow slump, feet sinking into lagery carpet, I'm talking to (or rather, at) Nick Cave: about the sacred recess of the word 'cave', about religious ground, about losing your world and gaining a soul, about paternal absence and the madness of the day... our bodies are dead, but our minds reach for the sky.

Easter 1999, give or take, and Nick Cave bounds onto a far from lagery stage at London's Royal Festival Hall like a man who's just been reborn. You could say that inside this cave there's never been anything else but a ceaseless (and/or sloppy) cycle of fall and resurrection. Tonight, Cave will not stint from brushing against such secret and sacred subjects; this is no ordinary 'gig' — it is, rather more, part recital, part career overview, part self-analysis, part stand up show.

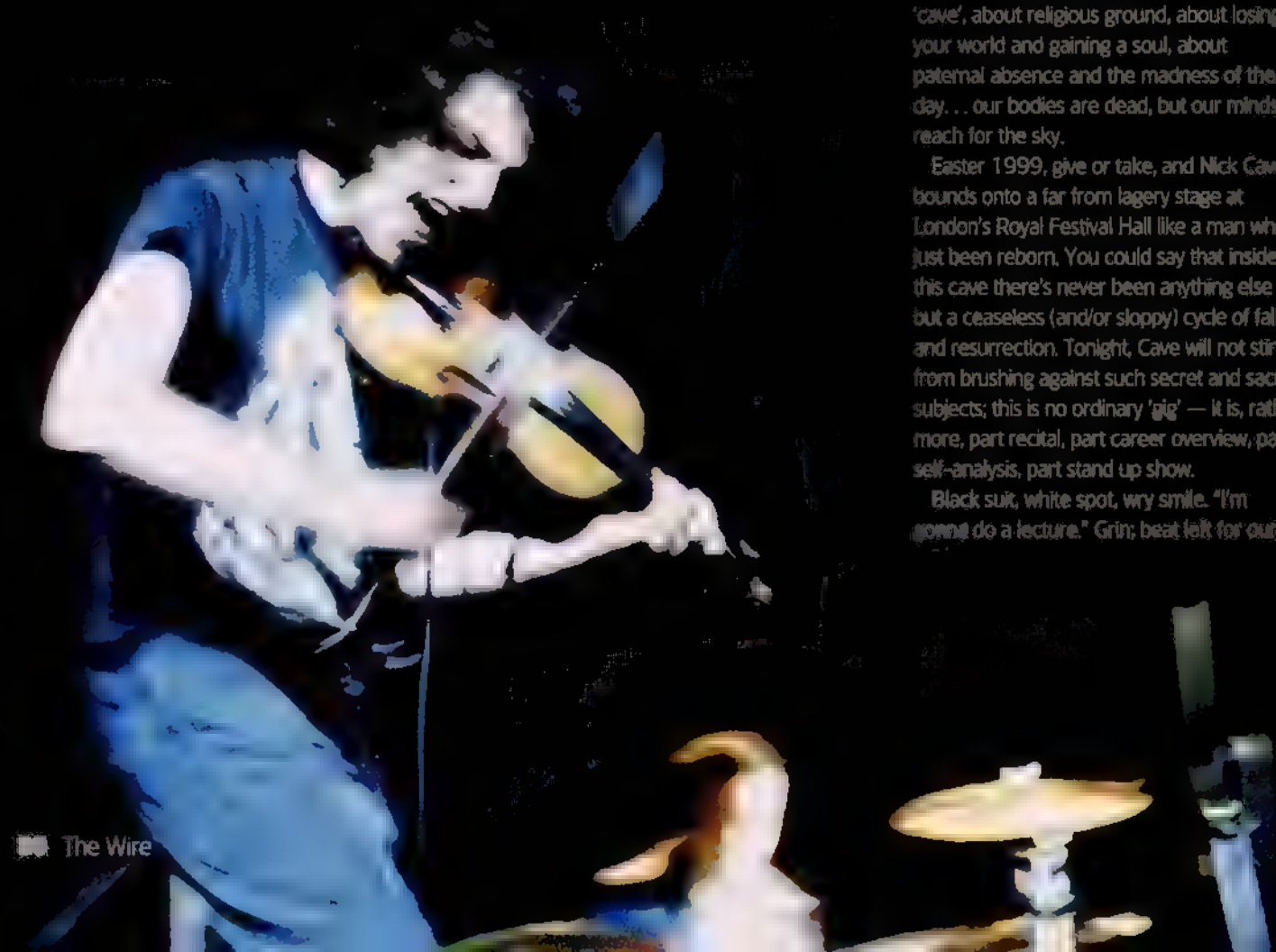
Black suit, white spot, wry smile. "I'm gonna do a lecture." Grin; beat left for out caressing laughter; thunder chords. Pay attention, now!

But this is thankfully a discourse far from the graveyards of academic desiccation. Cave is savvy enough to intersperse and illustrate his thoughts with song, wit, and... a slide show. (My, how far we've come since The Birthday Party's chainsaw self-massacres.) Behind him, on a screen: 'THE SECRET LIFE OF THE LOVE SONG.' Before us, the matter in hand: the alchemical Work of the singer. Cave once more inhabits familiar personae — snake oil salesman, preacher — to sell us some itchy truths. (Somewhere, he has a worn out video of Huston's *Wiseblood*.)

He couldn't start the musical side with a more perfectly judged illustration. A transformed, stately, de-jigged rendering of a recent song, which barks and trembles with hints of an older song, squaring a kind of glorious circle: "West Country Girl" via "Box For Black Paul". He talks about song as seduction, one which seduces its listeners but also the singer himself, who maybe starts out thinking he can control his creation, but soon finds 'real' life overrun by the song's Orphic force. This has the logic of Maurice Blanchot speaking of the writer swallowed by the lines he leaves. Later, Cave takes an even more unnerving line — one as old as gospel — where the 'you' of Song indicates both loved one (earth angel) and the singer's devotional God.

This all goes against the grain of an increasingly secularised and tabloid music press, where every dark song is indexed instantly and killingly to the singer's 'real' life or some imposed caricature. As Spiritualized's Jason Pierce said around the time of *Ladies And Gentlemen...*, this is to miss the point. When we listen now to Ray Charles or Hank Williams or John Lee Hooker, we do not automatically think: who was it that day, week or year, that 'caused' this song, what drug, what woman, what

Cave's man: Warren Ellis



JONATHAN HARVEY

A special release to celebrate his 60th birthday

JONATHAN HARVEY

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virtuoso pianist Philip Mead features in this exclusive world premiere recording of Harvey's recent homage to composer Olivier Messiaen for which the piano is continuously transformed by its ghostly tape counterpart. Also included is a spellbinding performance of the dense solo piano work, '4 Images After Yeats'. This essential tribute to one of the most important composers of our times is completed by two of Harvey's classic tape works, specifically remixed by the composer for this release

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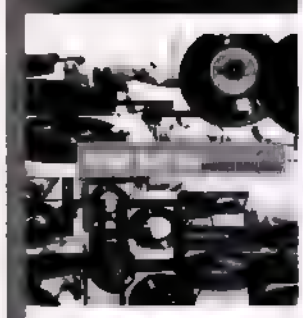
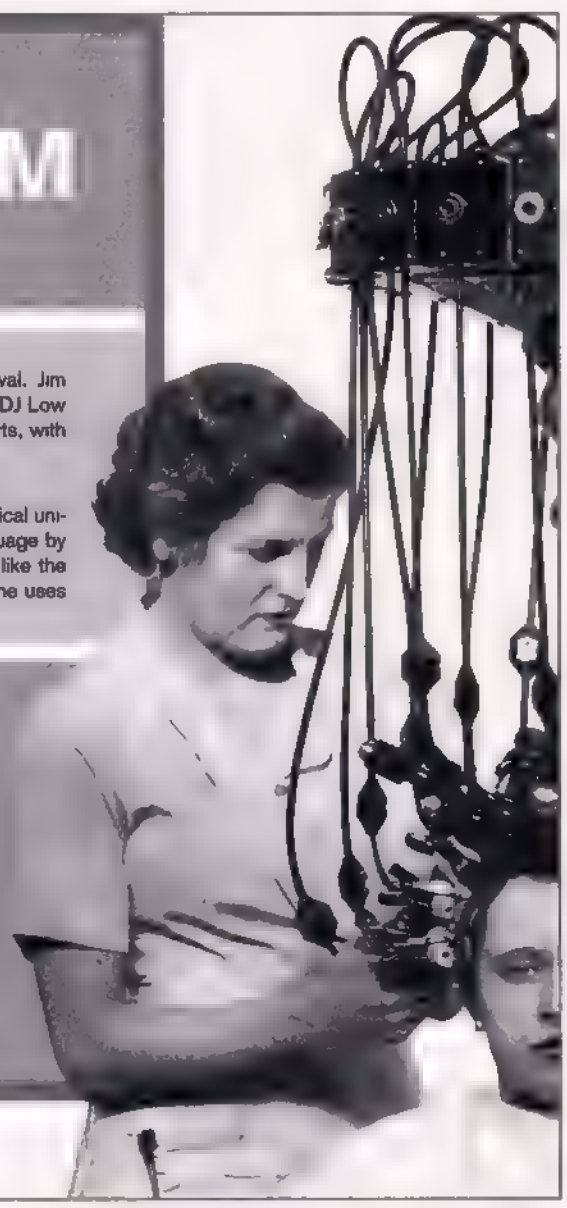


V/A: Fear No Fall [Lowlands Low 011]
Fear No Fall is the improvisation project that took place as part of the Belgium based Klapstuk Festival. Jim O' Rourke (guitar), Zeena Parkins (electric harp), Toshinori Kondo (trumpet), Dirk Wachtelaer (drums) and DJ Low (turntable) were involved. This cd is a selection of over 7 hours of recordings that were made of the concerts, with different combinations and solo and group improvisations.

Pierre Bastien: Musiques Paralloïdres [Lowlands Low 012]
For more than twenty years already composer and multi-instrumentalist Bastien is creating a wonderful musical universe full of poetry and imagination. In his famous Mecanium-project he constructed his own musical language by thirty small self made instruments ranging from violins, organ, percussion and non-European instruments like the anklung, sanza etc. This time Bastien creates a soundcollage that pays tribute to the recordplayer, which he uses as a portable instrument.

Martin Tétreault: La Nuit ou j'ai dit Non [Audioview 003]
Canadian turntable wizard Martin Tétreault says No. He definitely is one of these DJ's that left their fingerprints all over contemporary music. Starting from conceptual visual art, he quickly discovered the possibilities of music and started to experiment with cut-up techniques to create weird soundscapes. "La nuit où j'ai dit non" is a turntable opera like you have never heard before, using soundsources coming from recordings of Pierre Henry, Morton Subotnick, Eliott Carter and more. Why dig DJ Spooky if you can dig this...

Klangkrieg: Das Fieber der menschlichen Stimme [Audioview 004]
After 3 years of sound research and studio production Klangkrieg (Felix Knoth and Tim Buhre) has produced a new stunning work, called 'Das Fieber der menschlichen Stimme' ('The Fever of the Human Voice') featuring 9 compositions made out of processed human voice sounds. The title refers to an installation work conceived for 8 loudspeakers and cylindrical video projections that has been premiered at Den Anden Opera in Kopenhagen during the ArtGenda 98 festival. Most of the tracks make exclusive use of human voice sounds, ranging from cut-up spoken word to completely 'atomized' voice bits and digits. In excessive sonic treatment KLANGKRIEG split up words, meanings and information again and again until they lost their recognizable structures. About the dictatorship of precision



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Dave Douglas's Tiny Bell Trio. Opposite: Steve Swallow

woe? The 'I' and 'you' of Song are like Blanchot's 'neuter' of writing: a prison where we find a larger freedom. We find ourselves read by the song. Cave is very good on this — on how the song (if it's any good, and sometimes even if it is not) outlives its ostensible dateline and works according to what Hegelians know as the logic of the 'releve': something simultaneously marked by its origin but transcending it, carrying this temporal mark within itself, encrypted, a secret wound, and always reaching *beyond*. And if you think talk of Hegel and Blanchot is misplaced in a live review, you weren't there to witness Cave's own carefully structured dialectic between ostensibly 'simple' songs and deeply considered reflection.

Cave is also very funny, exhibiting a natural comedian's sense of pause and emphasis. (Lest we forget, he once led a group named after a Pinter play.) He's not above sending himself (or the other Cave, the Gothfather) up, talking thusly about the bleakest of his Bible black songs: "My brood of sad eyed children — they sit grimly on their own and don't play with the other songs."

Very moving too, when he talks about the premature death of his father and how this marked his life, his work, his writing: "At 41 years old I have become my father," he reflects, now a teacher in turn, lecturing us on how and why he has come to lecture us. Most of all, he circles the subject of Loss — as a shaping force inside and throughout his life, his own and his songs: "The Love Song is a sad song." From loss to belief is the journey he sees himself having taken: "Me, I'm a soul catcher for God."

And then the songbook's journey: a selection spanning his career. "Henry Lee" and "Do You Love Me" sound far more astute and heartfelt than their slightly Cave-by-numbers recorded versions; there is a tender, transcendent, piano-bass-violin (the latter played by Dirty Three's Warren Ellis) resetting of "The Mercy Seat", transplanted from frayed and torn yowl into a stately Cohen-like In memoriam. *The Boatman's Call* is perhaps Cave's best set of songs since *Your Funeral My Trial* or *The Good Son*, and "Far From Me" is simply, sublime — one of the best songs of recent times from one of the most convincing testamentary lyric collections of recent years, easily the equal of his hero Dylan's *Time Out Of Mind*. A new song, "Love Letter", had a chorus as catchy as catechism and came prefaced by a meditation as acute as it was funny about Cave's self-confessed "erotographomania": how some of us use the Love Letter to bring down a mighty, mighty weight on its recipient, how seduction easily shades into betrayal; how the Song survives at a cost, often outlasting the love that inspired it. "It endures, the object does not."

Something in Cave's lifetime has allowed him to settle down without dousing the eternally vexing flame beneath his feet. This new, almost meditative calm allows him to breathe new life into old songs, casting a revelatory light through old veils, disclosing a man who has always been searching for a properly redemptive voice through all the wild years and wilderness stops: all the strife and anti-strophe. Like the greatest singers like the now great Singer he is — Cave is the sort of soul who can spend a whole evening talking about nothing but himself, while never once seeming like a solipsistic fool. Far from it — far from 'me', his subject is the process whereby Song trumps any and all introspective traps. Every you a You, every I a multitude.

There were many voices aired tonight, including a visitation from an unlikely angel, a proper little Magdalene, who stood atop a podium and recited a surprisingly diabolic lyric. From danger to grace, from Dionysian party to Apollonian call, from "Dead Joe" to Kylie breathing life into "Better The Devil You Know" — Who could have foreseen such a journey? The echoes in this Cave look likely to multiply for a while yet.

IAN PENMAN

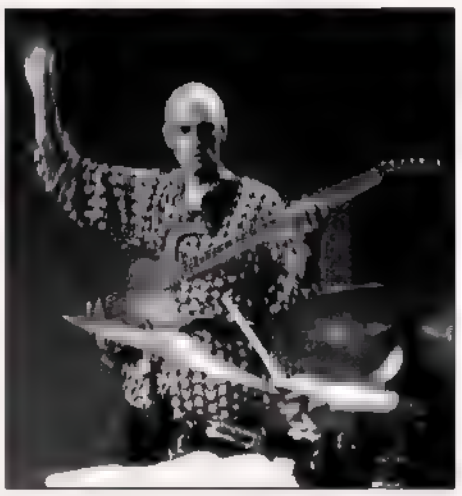
PHOTOS: KATRINA MITCHELL

Soundcheck 1999

UK, Glasgow CCA

Anyone eager for the ever-throbbing pulse and mysterious tongue of contemporary avant jazz would have found themselves dialling for an ambulance and a resuscitation team after this miserable, badly organised and pathetically programmed 'New Music' festival. Over the course of a weekend — hosted by Assembly Direct — things became so utterly wretched, especially during pianist/keyboardist Paul Harrison's innumerable appearances that I even began to pine for the lost glories of Paul Rutherford's ISKRA debacle at last year's LMC festival. At least they were funny.

Things were looking grim right from the get-go. Friday night's soundcheck for The Dave Conway Quartet rapidly descended to levels of inanity to match *Spinal Tap*. Conway is a Belfast-born bassist whose quartet is filled out with drummer Des Travis and two keyboard



players — Dave Troughton and the aforementioned Harrison. The pre-publicity had been dropping such heavyweight comparisons as Tony Williams Lifetime, and Conway has been talking up a storm about such 'drum 'n' bassers' as Squarepusher, 4Hero and LTJ Bukem, but even their nightmarish scenarios seemed beyond them. Instead, two keyboards spat cheesy horn samples and electronic parping noises over basslines that made "Three Blind Mice" seem like a crazed freedom chase. Halfway through the soundcheck, Harrison downed tools and petulantly threw his arm in the air. "Excuse me?" he bleated, "isn't this a bit boring?" "It's meant to get a bit boring," retorted Conway. Enough already.

On paper at least, BassDrumBone were a hotter proposition: trombonist Ray Anderson has played alongside the likes of Anthony Braxton and Han Bennink. But today they were reduced to the duo of Anderson and bassist Mark Helias, due to drummer Gerry Hemingway's sudden illness, and their music was a lewd and innuendo-riddled giggle through honking, sliding brass. Helias provided much needed respite from Anderson's crude mugging with some fantastic arcing basswork, but he was given little room to really breathe.

Saxophonist Phil Bancroft's latest project is a quartet featuring his brother Tom on drums alongside bassist Steve Watts and guitarist Don Paterson. Tom Bancroft is a phenomenal powerhouse drummer with the ability to levitate the whole quartet, sharp-cracking his snare like Rashied Ali. Phil's been compared with David Murray but boasts neither the teeth nor the passion for that particular brand of fire music. He's at his best on slightly blown, melancholic tunes like tonight's "Bee's Knees".

Trumpeter Dave Douglas was the only performer to raise the roof. His Tiny Bell Trio was such an invigorating, forward-straining blast of what jazz should be that it made every other performer look like so much mince. Despite the programme's incessant moaning about "the UK media blackout" on jazz coverage (do none of these gimps read *The Wire*?), most jazz fans will be aware of Dave Douglas, even if only as a vague satellite in the gravitational pull of the Zorn-centred NYC scene. That's nowhere near the full story. Last year's quartet recording *Charms Of The Night Sky* was a breathy, starlit rumination that took Don Cherry's lonesome bugle call into weird, neo-classical realms. Although purporting to be Douglas's "mini Balkan pocket jazz trio", Tiny Bell stalked similar paths to his quartet, from glacial Miles Davis-like floating pieces to frenzied machine gun trade-offs. Drummer Jim Black was far and away the star of the festival: maniacally fixing Douglas with a glass-eyed stare as he hurled trays of obscure ethnic percussion all over his kit, flapped at the skins with his hands and launching plastic toys into the air. Guitarist Brad Shepik was equally fired, chopping out some delicious slow-motion guitar, his playing soaked in the most lugubrious of tones. It was just such a joyous example of extra-sensory group interplay that won them the only encore of the festival from a crowd rabid for some interest and excitement.

The last night saw the return of the dreaded Paul Harrison for a series of duets with saxophonist Chris Potter. According to the programme, Harrison is "the best young jazz musician in Scotland" — but then again, in this universe, The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra's take on Duke Ellington and Miles Davis material is actually "better than the original recordings". A fistful of salt is definitely required. In reality Harrison's piano playing had all the poetry and vision of Les Dawson, his solos consisting of clumsy stumbling back and forth along the scales. Potter's saxophone was equally flat and thin. The pair of them would do well to last a lunchtime at Pizza Express. Bassist Steve Swallow, who has played with the likes of Jimmy Giuffre and George Russell, rounded off the whole sorry deal with a performance by his quintet. His quicksilver basswork was endearingly committed and complex, but his group stank up the whole room with clattering, cliched trumpet lines and the return of Chris Potter's vacuous whine.

Rabid rock critic Richard Meltzer famously quipped that jazz, when it's truly great, goes all the way from A through Z. apart from Dave Douglas this jazz barely staggered past B. Next year maybe someone who actually knows and cares about this music should book the festival.

DAVID KEENAN

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- [illegible] & Composers Ensemble [illegible] (19 May)
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- [illegible] (24 or 25 July [illegible])
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- [illegible] August)
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out there

May's selected live events, club spaces and broadcasts

Genesis P-Orridge

PHOTO FRANK BAUER

On stage

Angels Of Light Michael Gira's post-Swans group stop off in the UK on their European tour. London Borderline, 8 May, 0171 734 2095

Natacha Atlas Multikulti fusion from the London based singer. London Shepherd's Bush Empire, 4 May, £9, 0171 771 2000

Beastie Boys Two big shows for the tireless rap trio. London Wembley Arena, 7–8 May, £18 50, 0181 902 1234

Beatsystem Former Emit artist Derek Pierce presents an evening of live electroacoustic music, including pieces by Nono and Scelsi. Bath Kingswood Theatre, 8 May, 7 30pm, £3/£2. info *dpierce@bathspa.ac.uk*

John Bisset/Orphy Robinson + John Butcher An evening of Improv featuring vibraphonist Robinson, guitarist Bisset, saxophonist Butcher and the strings of Angharad and Rhodri Davies. London St Michael and All Angels Church, 20 May, 7 45pm, £4/£3, 0181 994 7993

The Charteris Affair Four Friday concerts featuring vocalist Phil Minton and the Bohman brothers — Jonathan and Morphogenesis member Adam (7 May); trumpeter Matthew Davis (14), Frank Charlton, Lol Coxhill, Peter Zumthor and Dave Fowler (21), and drummer Eddie Prévost with Tibetan antics from Michael Ormiston (28). London Charteris Community Centre, 7 30pm, £4/£3, 01784 481546

Claude Deppa's Horns Unlimited + Brice Wassy's African Rhythms Orchestra Double header bringing together Cameroonian drummer Wassy and South African trumpeter Deppa. Brighton Theatre Royal (23 May), Newcastle Playhouse (24), Bury St Edmunds Corn Exchange (25), Manchester RNCM Opera Theatre (26), Salisbury City Hall (28), Exeter Phoenix (29), Bath Pavilion (31), London QEH (1 June), Colchester Arts Centre (2)

Ensemble Modern Conductor Peter Rundel leads the New Music ensemble through a 20th century selection including George Antheil's *Ballet Méchanique*, Satie's *Le Piège De Méduse* and Stravinsky's *Les Noces*. London Barbican, 21 May, 7 30pm, £18 50–£8 50, 0171 638 8891

Experimental Audio Research + Longstone + Land Of Nod Ochre Records showcase their avant rock roster at this Scottish one-off night. Glasgow 13th Note, 27 May, 0141 553 1638

The Fall Back from the brink, with yet another new line-up, Mark E Smith continues to throw a spanner in the works of the music industry. Leeds Irish Centre (4 May), Birmingham Foundry (5), Brighton New Concorde (6), Sheffield University (9), Cheltenham Attic (10), Cambridge Junction (11), Southend Chinnery's (12), Luton Venue 21 (13), London Forum (14)

Female Of The Species Launch party for new all-women electronica CD compilation on London's Law & Auder label, with appearances from Isabel Waidner, Bit Tonic, Apache 61, Addie Brik, Tasha Killer Pussies, Chantal and many more. London Scala, 13 May, 8pm, £6/£5, 0171 833 2022

Ganger + The Wisdom Of Harry Scots post-rock unit with support. London Upstairs at the Garage, 21 May, £6, 0171 607 1818

The Herbaliser Funk and HipHop in a surrealist style. Liverpool Haigh Building (6 May), Leeds Underground (8), London Jazz Cafe (9)

Kazuko Hohki Multimedia mini-musicals from the Frank Chicken, including her music theatre pieces *The Shining Princess* and *Cloth Dreams*. London Battersea Arts Centre, 1–2 May, 8 30pm, £4/£3, 0171 223 2223

Huun Huur Tu The sound of Mongolia comes to London courtesy of these Tuvan throat singers. London Royal Festival Hall, 14 May, 7 30pm, £17 50–£10, 0171 960 4242

The Jungle Brothers Three nights of post-Native Tongues rap from Afrika Baby Bam and colleagues. London Jazz Cafe, 25–27 May, £16/£13 50, 0171 344 0044

Salif Keita Soulful sounds from the Malian bandleader. London Royal Festival Hall, 26 May, 7 30pm, £20–£10, 0171 960 4242

Lamb Return of the boy/girl breakbeat duo. London Shepherd's Bush Empire, 21 May, £9 50, 0171 771 2000

LEGO John Bisset's Improv-centric London Electric Guitar Orchestra play a handful of dates, at London Hope & Anchor (4 May), Deptford Beehive (15, 2 30pm), and with Alex Ward's Camp Blackfoot group (Oxford venue tbc, 22)

Low + Transient Waves + Piano Magic Lo-fi rock triple-bill. London Garage, 15 May, £6 50, 0171 607 1818. Low also appear with Empress and Vibracathedral Orchestra at Vector, Leeds Feast & Firkin, 21 May, time/price tbc, info 0113 230 7992

Lydia Lunch + Silo Return of the one-woman powerhouse. London Garage, 25 May, £7 50, 0171 607 1818

Ronu Majumdar + Abhijit Banerjee Transcendental bansuri flute from rising Indian classical star Majumdar, accompanied by tabla player Banerjee. Liverpool Philharmonic Hall (7 May), Wolverhampton Science Park Technology Centre (8), London Purcell Room (10), Kendal Brewery (14), Leicester Phoenix Arts (15), Bury St Edmunds Athenaeum (16)

Nightmares On Wax Joining the dots between funk, HipHop and rave, the Warp-signed Leeds crew do it live. London Scala, 5 May, £8, 0171 771 2000

Ozomatli Monster HipHop/Latin/funk outfit, featuring star turntablist Cut Chemist, tour the UK. London Jazz Cafe (6 May), Bristol Blue Mountain (8), Macclesfield Bar Cuba (13), Cardiff Clwb Ifor Bach (14), Leeds Cooker (15)

Maceo Parker Veteran alto saxophonist, collaborator with James Brown and George Clinton, returns with his septet. London Forum, 21 May, £15/£12 50, 0171 344 0044

Sam Prekop + Chicago Underground Trio + Lonesome Organist Chicagoan singer with The Sea And Cake brings his whimsical songwriting over for three UK dates, supported by Rob Mazurek and Chad Taylor's excellent neo-jazz unit. London Garage (5 May), Edinburgh Cafe Royal (11), Newcastle Riverside (12)

Bobby Previte John Zorn's resident drummer imports his Bump The Renaissance group, including Wayne Horvitz, Ray Anderson, Marty Ehrlich and Steve Swallow. Birmingham CBSO Centre, 1 May, 8pm, £9/£5, 0121 236 5622

Psychic TV + Master Musicians Of Jajouka + ? & The Mysterians Genesis P-Orridge exhumes the original PTV line-up, including founder member Alex Ferguson, plus a set from Gen's new project Thee Majesty. Also billed are the Moroccan Master Musicians with Bachir Attar, 60s cult garage punksters The Mysterians, and extra appearances from Scanner, Wild Billy Childish and The Headcoats, plus live TV link with Her Majesty Quentin Crisp. London Royal Festival Hall, 1 May, 7 30pm, £15/£12, 0171 960 4242

Sand Gloom-laden post-rock from the quartet led by ex-Germ producer Tim Wright. Glasgow 13th Note (4 May), Bristol Louisiana (5), Bath Moles (6), London Upstairs at the Garage (7), Manchester Upper Campfield Market (8)

Shellac Rare UK jaunt for Steve Albini and his current hardcore unit. London Improv Theatre, 16 May, £7 50, 0171 387 2414

Bim Sherman Veteran roots vocalist who lent his pipes to Talvin Singh's *OK* LP joins in with this celebration of Jamaican music. Brentford Watermans Arts Centre, 7 May, £8/£6, 0181 568 1176

Stereolab + Add N To (X) + Luke Vibert Launch night for new Manchester live venue. DJing comes from locals Badly Drawn Boy and Andy Votel. Manchester Planet K, 29 May, 9pm, £10, 0161 832 1111

Leon Thomas Experience Rare UK appearance from former Santana/Pharoah Sanders vocalist Thomas, supported by jazzy drum 'n' basser Erik Truffaz, Ninja Tune's J Swinscoe's Cinematic Orchestra, and Rainer Truby (Compost). Brighton Corn Exchange, 21 May, 8pm, £12, 01273 709709

Tokolosho South African saxophonist Ntshuks Bonga and his group (including John Grieve, Veryan Weston, Julia Doyle, Mark Sanders, *et al*) display their take on township jazz. London Red Rose Club, 13 May, £7/£5, 0171 277 9588

To Rococo Rot + Fridge Intricate electronica trio from Germany march into the UK for a co-headlining tour with the UK's chilled post-rockers. Sheffield Boardwalk (29 April), Edinburgh Gilded Balloon (30), Leeds Woodhouse Community Centre (1 May), London Scratch at the Water Rats (2), Brighton Madeira Hotel (3)

Twilight Circus Legendary Pink Dot Ryan Moore brings his dub remakes to London for the first time. London Underworld, 29 May, 0171 482 1932

Violent Femmes Tangled roots music from the legendary trio, playing their first UK date for three years. London Forum, 5 May, £14, 0171 344 0044

Mal Waldron/George Haslam Quintet Waldron, onetime pianist with Billie Holiday and Mingus, and Slam label honch

Haslam perform for the first time with their freeform quintet. The last two dates will include performances by Haslam's 12 piece group, Meltdown. Brawby The Shed (1 May), Welwyn Garden City Fairway Suite (2 May), Leicester YMCA Theatre (3), Nottingham Bonnington Theatre (6), Oxford Matrix Arts Centre (9)

Otomo Yoshihide + Project DARK Japanese turntable maverick meets British vinyl terrorists in a rooftop showdown, to coincide with the Hayward Gallery's new exhibition exploring the urban experience in Asia. London Queen Elizabeth Hall (roof), 14 May, 9pm, £10, 0171 960 4242

Club spaces

Bullitt Future HipHop and soul-jazz from regulars and guests including DJ Vadim and Portishead's Andy Smith. London Voodoo Lounge, Wednesdays, 0181 674 4816

Club Dreamtime New weekly jazz session featuring live sets from Dreamtime, featuring Jim Dvorak and Keith Tippett (8 May), Elton Dean and Alex Maguire's Headless Quartet (May 15), Bardo State Orchestra (22) London The Premises Studios, Saturdays, £6, 0171 729 7593

Current The third of *The Wire*'s own club nights features the first UK live performance by southern German electronica duo Funkstorung (Musik Aus Strom), and Robert Hampson's new sub-bass heavy project Chasm. DJing by Fat Cat ensemble Antenna Farm and hosts *The Wire* Sound System. London Crossbar, 20 May, 8pm-1am, £6/£4, 0171 837 3218

Electrocuted New and historic Electro, DJed by Buckfunk 3000, Mark Broom, Sherman and host Andrew Curley. London Crossbar, 14 May, 9pm-2am, £3, 0171 837 3218

Electro Magnetic Interference BN1 and Semiconductor present a multimedia event with live performances from Process, Jean Shirt, Dummy Run, Din and Semiconductor. Brighton Sussex Arts Ballroom, 28 April 7-11pm, £2/£1, 01273 323643

The Hip Trip Phuture lounge from DJ Mingo-go and guests. DJ Hypnotique (2 May), Annie The Musical (9), Andrew Divine (16), Morton Dunlop (23), and Katrina Pastel (30). Glasgow Alaska, Sundays, 11pm-3am, £3/£2

Klinker Low-key Improv doodlings. This month: Chris Burn plays Henry Cowell (6 May), Simon Rose and Adam Bohman (13), Prince Bouffant And The Conditioners (20), Birdyak (27), Dave Wilson's Jazz Flavours (28). London Sussex, info 0181 800 9200

Kosmische Krautrock enthusiasts present They Came From The Stars live, plus DJing from regulars Tom Total, Jim Backhouse and Una Amin. London Upstairs at the Garage, 22 May, 9.30pm-3am, £5/£4, 0171 607 1818. Kosmische also head down to the sea for a one-off featuring The Monsoon Bassoon and Radio 9. Brighton Lift, 27 May, 8pm-late, info 0171 385 6171

Little Stabs At Happiness Pulp's Mark Webber hosts this monthly night of underground film and underhand DJing. This month: Paul Schrader's *The Hardcore Life*, with Webber and friends, including Jarvis Cocker, on the decks. London ICA, 15 May, 8pm-1am, £8/£6, 0171 930 3647

Lost Pure percussive Techno from Jeff Mills and Steve Bicknell. Central London location, 2 May, 10pm-6am, info 0171 791 0402

Movement Tough drum 'n' bass from Ray Keith and Bryan Gee. London Bar Rumba, Thursdays, 9pm-3am, £6-£3, 0171 377 9494

NY Sushi Future beat science featuring Ganja Kru DJs (7 May), Fabio and Grooverider (14), DJ Punk Roc (21), Andy C and Randall (28). Sheffield The Unit, Fridays, £8-£6, 0114 267 1869

Open The Kosmische crew preside over an experimental night with Gagarin and DJ Robert Hampson and others. London George IV, 28 May, 10pm-3am, £5, 0181 674 5329

Revolution Digital discharge with 2nd Gen, Speedranch vs Jansky Noise, and Codetalker. London Monarch, 6 May, 8pm-1am, £4/£4, 0171 916 5700

Sausage Machine Return of this space for post-rock and electronica interfaces. This month: Australia's Tendrils and Scotland's El Hombre Trajeado, plus DJ John Kennedy (5 May), Main Active Sound System + Echo Park (12), Transient Waves plus support to be announced (26). London Po Na Na's, Wednesdays, 8.30pm-2am, 0171 359 6191

Scratch Londoners Fridge play alongside Berlin/Dusseldorf electronica trio To Rococo Rot, plus DJing from the Scratch crew and members of both groups. London Water Rats, 2 May, 7.30-11pm, £7/£6, 0171 733 1818

Slack Sabbath A different take on the day of rest, with DJs Pilote and MDK, plus live sets from Peanut Buddah and Muddle Headed. Brighton Arts Club Ballroom, May 30, 7-11pm, £1, 01273 779411

Sonic Mook Experiment Abstract electronics from Cristian Vogel and Jamie Lidell's Super Collider live, plus The W'seguys (1 May), Mekon and Deckwrecka (8) Psychonauts and Subsonic Legacy (15), James Lavelle (24), *The Wire* Sound System (29). London Scala, Saturdays, 9pm-late, £10-£8, 0171 833 2022

The Sprawl Innovative weekly beat science laboratory. This month: Puppy and Smallfish DJs (6 May), T Power and MRM (13), DJ 10 Sui (20) and a Spiky label night with Mellowtrons and The Goodlover Brothers (27). London Global Cafe, Thursdays, 7.30pm-midnight, £3/£2, 0181 568 3145. The Sprawl hops for one night to King's Cross, where Freeform launches his new Sprawl Imprint CD *Me Shape* along with Bedouin Ascent, Bit Tonic and Si-{cut}db. London Crossbar, 5 May, 8pm-1am, £5/£4, 0171 837 3218

Out There items for the June issue should reach us by ***Friday 7 May***

Radio

National

BBC Radio 1 97-99 FM

John Peel *Tuesdays-Thursdays 8:40-10:30pm* The best place to keep up with new rock, indie, Techno, Jungle, Electronica, dub and the legendary sessions

Gilles Peterson *Wednesdays midnight-2am* Up- and downtempo beats, experimental drum 'n' bass, funk, psychedelic soul, and plenty more in between

Andy Kershaw *Thursdays midnight-2am* Raw musics and global sounds, including folk, roots, reggae, out rock and more

Fabio & Grooverider *Fridays 2-4am* Two hours of fast-breaking drum 'n' bass

Westwood Rap Show *Fridays 11pm-2am/Saturdays 9pm-midnight* Tim's fast breaking HipHop tips

Annie Nightingale *Sundays 4-6.30am* Chilled, eclectic sounds for après clubbers, early risers and/or insomniacs

BBC Radio 3 90-93 FM

Jazz Century: 1999-Millennium *Saturdays 6pm* Weekly survey of jazz history. This month's episodes: *The Depression* (2 May), *Exodus: Jazz Overseas* (9), *Swing Takes Over* (16), *Count Basie & The Kansas City Style* (29)

Mixing It *Saturdays 10.45-11.30pm* Eclectic mix of new music and discourse from Robert Sandall and Mark Russell

Jazz On 3 *Saturdays 11.30pm-1am* Modern jazz recorded in concert. This month: Iain Ballamy's Food (1 May), Steve Swallow (8), Kenny Werner Trio (15), Denys Baptiste (22)

Regional

BBC Derby 94.2/95.3/104.5 FM, 1116 MW

Soundscapes *Sundays 3-6pm* Ashley Franklin plays instrumental electronica, contemporary classical/systems music, New Age and Ambient

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR) 94.9 FM

Destination In *Wednesdays 8-10.30pm* Ross Allen spins a motley, morphing selection of new music, from spacey jazz and minimalism to electronica and leftfield pop

Jah Wobble *Thursdays 8-9pm* Varied assortment of low-end and global sounds from the former PiL bassist

Charlie Gillett *Saturdays 7-9pm* Rock, roots, dub, World Music, blues, R&B and more sounds of the city

BBC Lancashire 95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW

On The Wire *Saturdays 12-2am* Steve Barker's wild New Music mix: dub, experimental electronics, out rock, free improv and more

BBC Merseyside 95.8 FM, 1485 MW

The Late World Noise *Sundays midnight-2am* Out rock, psychedelia, Jungle, avant dance, warped Ambient and global gems in themed sequences

BBC Scotland 92.4-94.7 FM

From Bebop To HipHop *Wednesdays 8-9pm* David Sillars drops jazz and new beats

Beat Patrol *Sundays 8-9pm* Peter Aston plays independent music across the spectrum

Electronica *Sundays 9-10pm* Marc Percival airs the latest Techno and dance tracks

Cable Radio 89.8 FM (Milton Keynes)

The Garden Of Earthly Delights *Fridays 10pm-midnight* Shane Quentin's blend of avant rock to electronic exotica with bizarre soundbites

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Dreem Teem *Sundays 6-8pm* Two-step breakbeats from the London duo

Paul Thomas *Sundays 3-5am* Experimental electronica mix

Patrick Forge *Sundays 10pm-midnight* Eclectic jazz-not-jazz mix

Frost and Hype *Sunday/Monday midnight-2am* More breakbeat that's chilly the most

4 Hero *Mondays 2-4am* Jazz Jungle, cyber-soul breakbeats, electrified grooves from the Reinforced duo and guests

Colin Dale *Wednesdays 2-4am* Minimal Techno and concrete House

Surf 107 FM (Brighton)

Totally Wired *Daily 11pm-1am* Eclectic selection of leftfield independent/dance tunes, laces with 60s/70s flashbacks

The Chill Factor *Sundays 5-7am* Clive Craske's continuous mix of drum 'n' bass, dub, psych-HipHop, classoical, Improv and electronica

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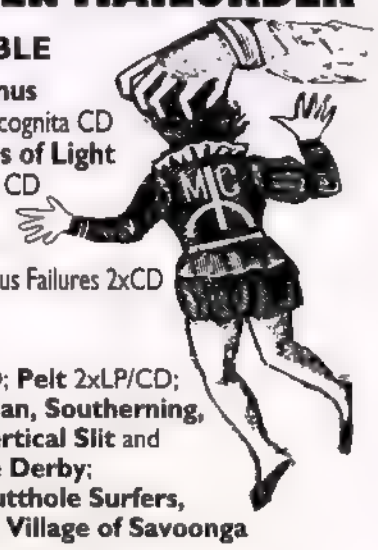

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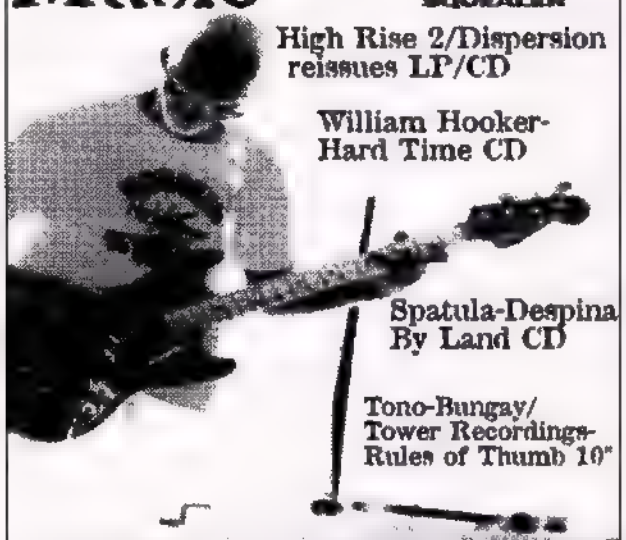

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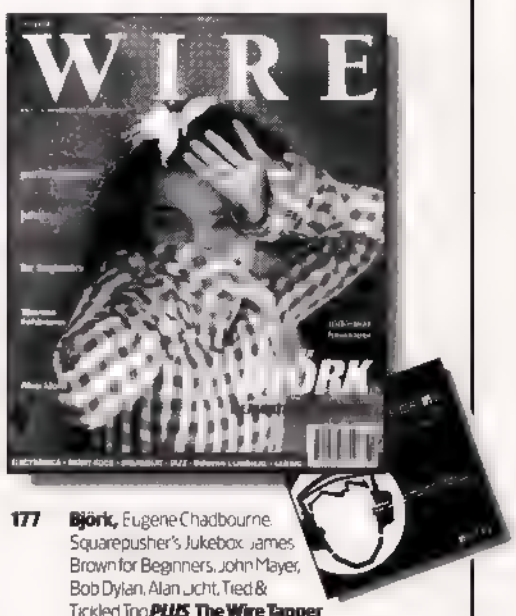

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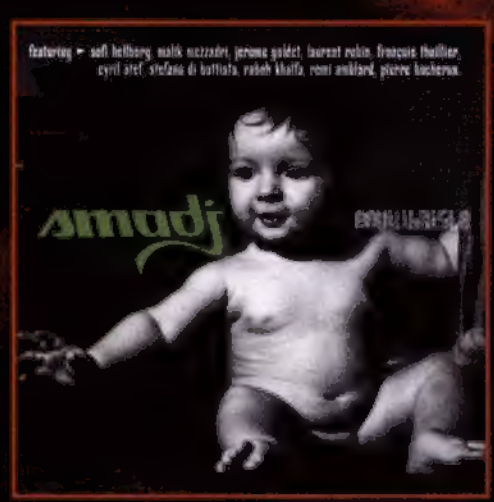
Fourth World, the originators and finest exponents of 'World Jazz' and 'Global Sounds' release the final installment of Airto Moreira and Flora Purim's band project. Including the classic "Light As A Feather" and featuring Airto and Flora at their dazzling and brilliant best, "Last Journey" is a defining moment of raw energy and creative musicianship. Taking on board their experiences and sounds from the second half of this century, Fourth World, together with guest appearance by Giovanni Hidalgo bring their collective sound and skill to shine a light directly into the next millennium.
'Last Journey' the definitive Fourth World album.



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EQUILIBRISTE BW2126

With a musical apprenticeship in jazz, French producer, guitarist/oud player Smadj has taken his Tunisian roots and his club experiences to produce a sound which combines real live drum and bass with the music of North Africa. Equilibriste is an album which pushes back the barriers and pre-conceptions of jazz into a contemporary cocktail beyond anything heard before.

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CHRISTY DORAN AND BORIS SALCHAK
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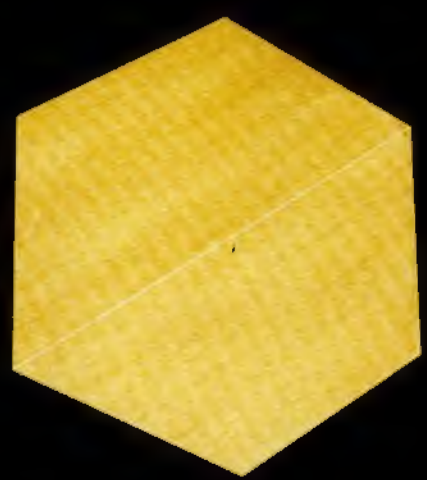

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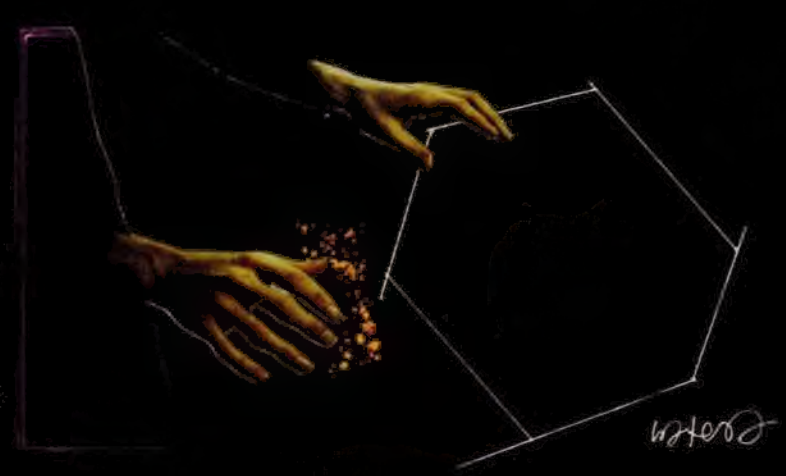

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